THE LOST HERO

A BIOGRAPHY OF SUBHAS BOSE

MIHIR BOSE

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THE LOST HERO

ALSO BY MIHIR BOSE

Keith Miller: A Cricketing Biography

THE LOST HERO

A Biography of Subhas Bose

MIHIR BOSE

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To Baba and Ma who, in their own ways, started me off

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Nobody who grew up in post-war India could have avoided the name of Subhas Bose, yet his was not an easy biography to write. India, as Nehru once lamented, does not have a tradition of strong biographical writing. In India the carefully researched book is the preserve of the American scholar, while the popular work is the preserve of the journalist. I, a journalist and an Indian, was therefore suspect on two counts and often found it difficult to convince sceptical archivists that production of well-researched works was not exclusive to American university-financed scholars. Nevertheless many officials offered their help willingly and therefore I would like to thank all of the following: Dr S.N. Prasad and his staff; Martin Moir; K. Hiscock; Dr Maria Keipert; Dan O'Clemmer Jr; Herr Forwick; Karla Götz; Philip Reed; Jacqueline Kavanagh; John Taylor; K. Suyama; S.N. Puri; and Tsuneo Endo.

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INTRODUCTION

The story of Indian independence is well known. Even its heroes are firmly established – Mohandas Gandhi, the saintly demagogue, and Jawaharlal Nehru, his rationalist, Fabian acolyte. A national-liberation movement that relied not on guns and bullets but on non-violent love and inner strength; a method used to such effect that even as the conqueror struggled against it he came to admire it. Lately, too, another hero has emerged to make the legend complete: Louis Francis Albert Victor Nicholas Mountbatten, Admiral of the Fleet, Earl of Burma. He arrives in India as Viceroy in March 1947; he produces a plan for partition of India that politicians who have spent their lives opposing the very idea instantly accept. By August 1947 India is free; and when, two weeks after Independence Day, Nehru and Patel urgently summon him with the confession that they don't know enough about administration, he goes on to save the newly independent country.

In the face of such compelling myths history must come a poor, unwanted second. Yet the history of India's struggle for freedom was not quite that simple. A frail old vegetarian, a Fabian socialist and a dashing young royal did not between themselves produce the India that emerged on 15 August 1947. The story is altogether more complicated, and even more romantic. There were other men and women, as well as deeper interactions of political, social and economic movements. Prominent among these men was one who opposed Gandhi, was a bitter rival of Nehru and waged war against Mountbatten. This is his story, and that of the alternative, violent, revolutionary struggle for Indian independence – one that often

paralleled the non-violent one and occasionally threatened to overwhelm it.

The man, of course, was Subhas Chandra Bose. Today in India he is deified. His name is given to parks, roads, buildings, sports stadiums, artificial lakes; his statues stand in place of those of discarded British heroes and his photograph adorns thousands of calendars and millions of *pan* (betel-nut) shops. It is always the same picture – Bose in military uniform exhorting his countrymen forward to one last glorious struggle: the final answer to the British calumny that Indians could not fight.

Bose is important on many counts. He was in some ways the most Indian of the great nationalist leaders: religious, full of Indian mysticism and devoted to the ancient Indian loyalties of the land, the river, the soil. Yet, curiously, he was also very Western. As a student in Calcutta and London he had imbibed deeply the Western tradition of rationalism. Hegel's thesis–antithesis–synthesis was a constant source of reference, Bergson's *élan vital* was always a prod for endeavour; and, in the traditions of Western secularism, religion for him was a private, personal thing: a little prayer corner in his room – very often the prison cell; a well-thumbed *Gita* (the Hindu Bible); a few quiet hours in a reformist Hindu mission.

His mysticism was confined to his letters and discussions with his friend, confessor and companion Dilip Roy. These are at times difficult to understand and even more difficult to interpret in Western terms. Bose in public life, however, was always clear and practical – perhaps, at times, obsessively so. Gandhi shrouded his politics in concepts and myths that even the most devout Hindu found difficult to follow, while Nehru's political utterances were hedged with his own doubts and personal vacillation. In an age overflowing with consensus politicians, Bose should have been hailed as the outstanding example of the politician with convictions. A man who preferred his deeply felt nationalism to the easy, luxurious life of an Indian civil servant; a revolutionary who genuinely sought a radical transformation of Indian society. Yet these are the very qualities condemned both by the Indians who fought him and by the Raj he fought.

For the post-Raj Indian Establishment, Bose is inconvenient since he will not allow their story of Gandhi working the magic of non-violence to come to its triumphant conclusion. This view is

best expressed by Kripalani, the last of the major Gandhians still alive: '*Satyagraha* [non-violent protest] was Gandhiji's unique concept and he alone knew how to use it. Whenever he challenged the British Government we followed – Bose was just one of the people in the [Congress] Working Committee.' Some of the anti-Gandhi nationalists are happy to seize and enlarge on the consequences of Bose's actions; to acknowledge the man himself would raise too many questions.

For the Raj and its followers, Bose is simply the ultimate pariah: 'repellent character', 'arrogant', 'narrow nationalist', 'renegade', 'traitor', 'dictator' – the hate list is almost infinite. Even those prepared to come to terms with his personality and achievement seem to fall back exhausted in a conclusive, pitiful parable of the Occidental failing to understand a scrutable Oriental.

His Bengali origins have possibly heightened this distaste. Bengal was the first province to fall to the British, the Bengalis the first to realise the usefulness of adapting to their new rulers. Yet, in both rulers and the ruled, this resulted only in hate and scorn. The early British scorned the Bengalis for the ease with which they had allowed Clive and his East India Company men to conquer them, the later imperial Raj ridiculed their efforts to imbibe English culture and education. In the eighteenth century Luke Scrafton could write of the Bengalis as a 'slightly made people' with 'dejected minds' that 'fall an easy prey to every invader': by the time Kipling arrived the Bengali *babu* proudly flaunting his 'B.A. failed', and claiming acquaintance with Shakespeare, was a finely honed figure of Raj fun. No other great empire – not the Roman, or even the Russian – has been so horrified at the thought of cultural proselytisation.

Malcolm Muggeridge has suggested that Arabs have always had a great appeal for a certain type of upper-class Englishman; partly, perhaps, because they are given to sodomy – a favourite pursuit at English boarding-schools – but in any case because they have a seeming simplicity of character and directness of manner which, in the days of the British Raj and the Palestine Mandate, contrasted agreeably with the deviousness of the Indian Hindus and the Israeli Jews. Even allowing for Muggeridge's characteristic reference to sodomy, a certain latent anti-semitism did co-exist with promotion of Muslims and virulent Hindu-baiting. Quite soon after the Raj

had been established, Indians were divided between, on the one hand, the ugly, deceitful Bengalis who, finding the Raj's liberal education inadequate, created the first nationalist movement; and, on the other, the good Indians: the tall, upright, uncomplicated, martial races of the north, who were credited with manliness and a certain Indian version of public-schoolboy comradeship and trust. Some of this reflected the fact that the north Indians had given the British a tough time as they tried to conquer India. Conveniently, they were also conservative – even obscurantist – and hostile to progressive Western ideas. This suited the Raj's purpose admirably. Certainly, this 'two-Indias' theory was very much a part of the currency of abuse the Raj would increasingly hurl against the nationalists: the nationalists were only an alien-educated élite who did not understand their own countrymen; the Raj and its officials were the true heirs to the Moghul Empire (and other Indian empires) and best understood the oppressed millions of Indians. Bose, as part of a new generation of Indians who challenged this remarkable interpretation of history, could not but be an object of special hatred.

V.S. Naipaul has written that the Raj was 'an expression of the English involvement with themselves rather than this with the country they ruled': pointing not to the good or evil of British rule in India but to its failure. Various writers have sought to explain this failure between two peoples of tragically dissimilar temperaments: perhaps most perceptively – certainly most entertainingly – Nirad Chaudhuri, in many ways the most original writer on the Raj. It can also be seen as a story of unrequited love, as in the case of Lord Curzon. Today, liberal-humanist Indians reaching beyond the debates of the imperial age recognise that he was the last of the truly great Viceroys. In the early part of this century Curzon's decision to partition Bengal sparked the first nationalist agitation in India. But, when he punished a British regiment for beating a native cook to death, almost the entire British community in India turned against him: Curzon had violated the fundamental law of the British in India that in any dispute with the Indians, the British must always stay together even if it meant shielding a murderer.

A personal factor also worked against Bose: the lack of worthwhile contacts between Bose and the emerging British establishments. Unlike Gandhi, he did not become a cult figure with a

certain Quaker–Theosophical crowd; unlike Nehru, he did not balance Shirley Williams on his knee while discussing the international position of socialists. Apart from a few years at Cambridge and a very brief visit during 1937, the strenuous efforts of the India Office kept him out of Britain. Thus almost all Bose's significant European contacts were with the continentals: Austrians, Germans, Italians. And this only served to confirm the Raj image of him as the 'ugly Indian'.

A proper study of Bose's revolutionary ethos and the movement he represented, of course, poses a threat to cosy post-imperial assumptions about the decline of the Empire. In this entertaining but essentially ahistorical view, facts have not so much been suppressed – they have been footnoted and ignored. However much Indians do to come to terms with their awful history, the Raj's historians have retreated to a world of fantasy where the far-sighted British statesmen are always shown to be one jump ahead of the latest native move. If there was violence – as there was in Ireland, Kenya, Israel, Cyprus and India – it was all the fault of irresponsible demagogues unable to appreciate the finer points of British statesmanship. The French may have faltered in Algeria, the Americans in Vietnam, but not the British. Bose, 'implacable foe of British rule in India', as the India Office secret note on Bose circulated to British embassies in Europe would put it, challenges this carefully constructed myth – a myth that found wings thus:

> On this 15th August 1947 we British . . . bowed our heads in the temple of Rimmon to the treacherous gods of Nationalism and created yet two more intensely national States to flutter the peace of the world – we who serve the cause of Peace, the cause which we know can only be served by breaking down the ancient tribal barriers that keep man from man and set jealous men at each other's throats. Through our weakness we have probably wrought ill for the future . . . we were as wrong in principle to create them as we are now to act as midwife at the birth of yet a new nation, a new form of unrest, the nation of the Jews, a fosterchild which we shall be loth to recognise.

These words, written on Independence Day by Sir Francis Tuker, GOC Eastern Command during the critical period 1946–7,

were in part a reflection of the tremendous rage and frustration that Indian Independence produced. Tuker's memoirs are filled with unrelenting bitterness and an almost personal distaste for the Hindus that is quite remarkable. (It mirrored the widespread grief that Indian Independence produced among the British in India.) Even Field-Marshal Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief in India at that time, was to confess some years before his death that in 1947 he felt near to 'mutiny' and in 'total despair' at the thought of leaving India. The thoughts of lesser officials as they faced up to a life in post-Raj Britain also make sad and at times disturbing reading. Yet to try and explain imperial rule in terms of international peace and goodwill, as Tuker sought to do, represents an extraordinary inversion: the final contradiction of the British imperial ethos.

The British conceded the right of subject countries to nationalism but set an impossible condition: they could not organise against the British. The dichotomy was well expressed by H.R. James, Principal of Calcutta's Presidency College while Bose was a student there (and a man who plays a crucial part in the early story of Subhas): 'One thing that patriotism in Bengal should not do', he warned some students once, 'is to direct the national spirit into an attitude of hostility to British rule. There would be something I should call patricidal in such an attitude.' This attitude remains the most sophisticated and remarkable cover-up for occupation by an alien superior power. It allowed Linlithgow to mourn the death of a prominent Indian collaborator as the loss of a man of 'wide citizenship', and enabled Lord Lytton in *Pundits and Elephants* – a memoir of his years as Governor of Bengal – to praise S.N. Mullick for his sacrifice in choosing the 'hard road' of collaboration, with its high salary and all the privileges of office.

In the thirty years since the end of the Raj the James Lytton doctrine has been reincarnated into the wider historical lie that there was nothing for the Indians to fight about. The imperial myth can be traced back to the heyday of the Empire. In 1862, Lord Acton in his *Essay on Nationality* was convinced that, if nationalism and socialism were allowed to go on unchecked, their course would be 'marked with material as well as moral ruin, in order that a new invention – the nation state – may prevail over the works of God.' For Acton the empires of Great Britain and Austria–Hungary were the

peaks of civilised progress, accommodating inferior races who could be 'raised by living in political union with races intellectually superior'. Nation-states were too diffuse, they could spread the evils of egalitarianism.

This ahistorical reconstruction of imperialism can accommodate Gandhi – after all, he sought to change human beings, to move them with love and kindness. It is useless against the clear, rationally expressed nationalism of Bose. But because Bose has been such a beleaguered figure – both with the Congress Raj and the real Raj – his supporters have – perhaps understandably – gone to the other extreme in magnifying his virtues and completely obscuring his faults. Hero worship is a natural enough thing and critical acceptance of a leader is rare, yet it is interesting and at times amusing to read accounts given by Bose's supporters where events that tend to throw a dubious light on him are completely omitted. The result is **copious but poor biography**.

For the outstanding point about Bose was that, though as a nationalist he was in many ways far ahead of his time, he could not always overcome the limitations of nationalism. He could argue brilliantly and with great emotional fervour that Indians should become freedom-mad. But he was often slow to recognise – and at times failed to recognise at all – that freedom could only be a means to an end, not an end in itself. His celebrated eclecticism and his constant search for the enemies of Britain, without always checking their credentials, led him to strange pathways and even, at times, dead ends. Not all the ills of India were traceable to the Raj. Bose rejected Marx's penetrating observation that the Raj was an unwitting tool of history. While its very administration was a weapon of oppression, it would also help break open the hermetically sealed Asian village communities; by the time the Raj was over these immemorial village societies could no longer be outside history but would be very much a part of it.

True, Bose could argue that the very nature of the Raj prevented any radical restructuring of India. But before the great revolt of 1857 there had been reforms – however limited. The sheer funk the revolt produced among the British in India evaporated this evangelical fervour and the sambhunt sahibs soon became the highest Indian caste. This, in turn, allowed the Indian to retreat into a comforting world of fantasy where they could happily commune up

reassuring images of fictitious pre-British greatness.

It is, of course, an old charge against Indians – in fact against all nationalists: their willingness and ability to mix fact with fantasy. This, for a biographer of Bose, presents particular problems. For many of Bose's uncritical supporters the most pressing question is not what Bose said or did, but whether he is still alive. More than thirty-five years after his death, millions of Indians refuse to believe that he died in the plane that crashed in Taiwan on 18 August 1945, three days after Japan's surrender – or that he is dead at all.

No single aspect of Bose's life has been so meticulously investigated as his death, and each investigator has dwelt deeply and lovingly on various inconsistencies. This has resulted in two government commissions of enquiry, a copious flow of distorted, poorly researched books speculating on his whereabouts, and periodic demands that the Indian government summon the intelligence chiefs and secret files of all the major powers – the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., China, France and Britain – finally to ascertain what exactly happened to Bose. It has also led to other strange things.

Since 1962 Uttam Chand Malhotra, who sheltered Bose in Kabul as he fled India in 1941, has been perfecting an organisation to welcome him on his return. Malhotra had expected Bose to return in 1962, and on 23 January 1975 he was convinced that his hero had at last come home. This is from the *Indian Express* of 24 January 1975:

> NETAJI RETURN HOAX: CULPRITS BEATEN UP
> Kanpur, January 23.
>
> Four persons were rescued from an incensed mob and arrested here today after the much heralded reappearance of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his 79th birthday turned out to be a hoax.
>
> About one Lakh [100,000] people had gathered at Phoolbagh following the announcement that 'Tulsibaba of Mathia' would appear there at 5 p.m. and reveal himself to be Netaji.
>
> The announcement had been made by 'All India Adhyalmik Subhas Kranti Bahimi', 'Jai Gurudev Prachanak Sangh' and Mr. Uttam Chand Malhotra said to be a one-time associate of Netaji.
>
> But at the appointed hour, Mr. Malhotra and Tulsibaba were

seen driving away from Phoolbagh in a car. This set off a stampede. Thousands surged forward and beat up authors of the hoax on the dais on which Tulsibaba was to appear.

Police moved in and arrested four of the organisers. But the crowd snatched away the President of the Subhas Bahini, Hiralal Dixit, and started beating him with shoes and other objects. He was again rescued by the police and taken away in an unconscious state—UNI.

When I asked Malhotra what good Bose's return to India would do now in view of the fact that he would be well over eighty (the conversation took place in October, 1977), he replied, 'But he is Krishna (a Hindu god). He could live to be a hundred and fifty. He is immortal.'

This biography is based on the belief – reached after examining all the published and otherwise available evidence – that Subhas Chandra Bose died in Taioku Hospital on the night of 18 August 1945, his body a horribly burnt mass of flesh but his spirit still full of the fire that had been his life.

'Tell my countrymen I fought for India's freedom with my last breath. India will be free, and before long.'

Let us now turn to Cuttack and the closing years of the nineteenth century to see how it all began.

PART I

THE REBEL AND THE *BHADRALOKS*

Those who are considered good boys in the society are in fact nothing but eunuchs. Neither in this world nor in any other has any great work been achieved or will any great work be done by these people. These boys somehow or other reduced their burden of sin and they follow the track of the most orthodox people like a herd of sheep. Throughout their most prosaic life there is no taste of anything new or novel, there is no outburst of full-hearted laughter, there is no inspired self-sacrifice. . . . One has to love new things, one has to grow mad for the unknown, one has to express himself in the free mind and under the open sky by breaking through all the barriers of life and by razing them to the ground.

Subhas Bose, *Prison Notebook III*,
Mandalay 1925–7

1

MUSCULAR HINDUISM

Subhas Chandra Bose was born in Oriya Bazar, Cuttack, at midday on Saturday 23 January 1897. It was the height of Empire: Victoria was celebrating her Diamond Jubilee, Indians who mattered vied with one another to pay homage to her gracious Majesty, and in Poona the first stirrings of a violent struggle against the Raj were efficiently crushed, its leader Tilak exiled on charges of sedition. Vivekananda, whose influence moulded Subhas' early life, returned from America a hero: the first in a long line of Hindu monks who have arrived there penniless, yet almost overnight succeeded in creating mystic legends.

Subhas' birth created no stir in the large Bose family, though his mother Prabhavati had a difficult delivery. 'Thank God she somehow got through', recorded Subhas' father Jankinath in his diary. For him it was an event of no great importance. 'Not much to note. Things as usual', he had written the day before the birth. This was, after all, their sixth son and ninth child (several more had died soon after birth), and a large family was part of the life-style of a man who had established a reputation and a practice at the Cuttack Bar.

If proof was required, people only had to see the house Jankinath had built (or acquired – it is not clear which). It would have been prominent anywhere; in Oriya Bazar it was – is – a sensation; a characteristically flamboyant piece of Bengali architecture in a very bleak setting. Oriya Bazar is like any other Cuttack lane, narrow, meandering and messy; the houses are dreary, unremarkable and mostly inhabited by poor Muslims. They have no numbers and few names except for Jankinath's.

A huge, imposing gate opens on to a large *ootan*, the obligatory Bengali courtyard formed by the U of the building, which leads to a narrow flight of stone stairs, a large verandah and a long line of rooms. In the middle of this is one room with a high ceiling and many windows. This caters to the Bengali fetish for open air, and has three doors, one of which faces south. It contains a built-in wooden *almirah* (safe) and an iron bed. It was in this room that Subhas was born.

Today Oriya Bazar and the house itself are fully part of the growing quantity of 'Subhasiana'. While a small group of poor Muslims play cards on the verandah, the official guide takes pains to recreate – perhaps create – history: he points out the spot on the stairs where toddler Subhas often fell; the middle room now cluttered up with pictures of Subhas in every conceivable corner; an adjoining room crammed with indistinguishable pieces of what are described as Subhas' toys; his first *charka* (spinning-wheel); and the terrace from where he could see much of Cuttack as well as the three service privies in the backyard for servants. On the wall outside the house a stone plaque announces the great event of his birth. It is white and shiny and only a few years old.

Jankinath was an immigrant to Cuttack from Kodalia, a village that in recent years has become part of the ever-widening boundaries of Calcutta. Legend has it that, when matchmakers first proposed marriage between Jankinath – then a college teacher in Calcutta – and Prabhavati, her father Ganganarayan Dutt was not particularly enthusiastic. Prabhavati was the eldest, and a great favourite; a poor teacher would hardly fit in a family whose other sons-in-law included a district and session judge, a subordinate judge and a Rai Bahadur (one of the high titles the Raj conferred on its collaborators). Ganganarayan Dutt, it is said, had one look at his prospective son-in-law and refused to agree to the marriage: 'Go and make money and come back, and then perhaps we can consider you.' So Jankinath went off to Cuttack, and returned years later flushed with money to claim the hand of Prabhavati. Like all the best stories, this is probably apocryphal; but Bengali myth was definitely against the marriage. There is a very old Bengali saying:

Ghosh Bangsho boro bongsha
Bose Bongsho Datta

Mitra kutil jat
Dutta sala haram jadha.

It means :

The Goshes are high caste,
The Boses are generous,
The Mitras are cunning,
But the Dutts are scoundrels.

In the case of the Boses, contemporary history had provided an economic edge to the argument. Jankinath belonged to the older Hindu élite who had had power and influence in pre-British India; Muslim rulers of Bengal had had Bose ministers, and the family had had titles, land and various privileges conferred on them.

The Hathkola Dutts were the new élite – the first to realise the benefits of collaboration with the British. Soon after British rule was established they started working in British commercial firms, pleading in British courts and even presiding over them; they eagerly accepted British titles and honours. Interestingly, when Subhas wrote his autobiography at the age of forty he glossed over the collaboration in his mother's family but stressed the pre-British eminence of his father's family. In fact, both were Kayasthas, one of the numerous sub-castes of the fantastic Hindu caste system. Though they like to describe themselves as Kshatriyas – the second of the four legendary Hindu castes – Brahmans (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (traders), Sudras (Untouchables) – little definite is known about the origin of the Kayasthas. They were probably low-caste Sudras who, by their opportunism and cleverness during Muslim rule, rose to positions of eminence and power. Long before Subhas was born the Kayasthas had acquired a status in Bengal second only to that of the Brahmans.

Jankinath was very much the product of the renaissance that had swept Bengal at the time of the Indo-British honeymoon: at no time before or after it did the British connection look so good or collaboration prove so profitable. For a whole generation of Indians it was the most glorious period of Indian history. It was a time of iconoclasm, a time of change, a time when the decadent, dying Indian culture was suddenly confronted with a vibrant, confident Western

one which would revive it, and whose reforming evangelism would cure Hinduism of its barbaric practices. Michael Madhusudan Dutt renounced the English language and introduced blank verse to Bengali, while Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Hindu heroes, after expelling the alien Muslim, paid homage to the British; this new force was helping India discover her own history and culture. Astonished Indians learnt that the hoary Indian past had been rich, eventful and interesting. Western learning investigated and unearthed Hindu learning. Hindus yearned to go back to the blissful days of the Vedas where it was all gold. As so often in religious masonic movements, the past shone without any blemish – if buttressed by Western learning and scholarship.

Jankinath remained a quiet, simple man. He presided over the Cuttack Theosophical Lodge, supported the Victoria School and started the Union Club. Every evening at five he and his wife would climb into their *fitton gari* (horse-drawn carriage), the hood would be pulled down and they would drive to the Union Club. Plain living and high thinking formed part of his constant advice to his sons and grandchildren. Outside the courts he dressed simply: tennis shoes, *dhoti*, a shirt. Even when Subhas was already a national figure, he would go thus attired for walks round Calcutta's Maidan. Like the mythical Boses he was generous. Every Sunday he would distribute grain to his peasant subjects – for, nearly all his life he maintained besides his family a whole host of relatives, and just before his death he provided for his old servants and dependants: even today older Cuttack residents talk of his generosity.

For his host of grandchildren he was *dadabhai:* kind, loving, affectionate. But for his sons, and Subhas in particular, Baba (as the father is called in Bengali) was distant, reserved. Whenever he entered the room Subhas would get up from his chair to indicate respect, and he was always *apni* – the more formal application of the personal pronoun 'you'. *Ma* (mother), however, was *tumi* – a little more approachable, more intimate. With her there could be discussion, argument, even differences, though Prabhavati was a difficult mother to convince. Her word was law. She had never been to school, could not speak a word of English and had been married at an early age, yet she guided the education of her children and other relations and effectively ran the family. She also possessed a deep and abiding devotion to religion.

Yet both parents were aloof; Subhas' closest associate was a simple servant girl called Sarada who called him Raja (king) and doted on him. Inevitably he developed the traits of a lonely child, spending entire days in study and prayer in the little prayer-room on the terrace, or hoarding his share of bread in a cupboard meant for books, for subsequent distribution to the poor of the neighbourhood.

The first school Subhas was sent to, in 1902 at the age of five, reinforced this sense of alienation. From a wholly Bengali setting he arrived at a nucleus of the British presence in India. The headmaster, despite twenty years in India, could not speak the local dialect; the great majority of Anglo-Indian students (always more English than the genuine product) detested the minority Indians; and Subhas was wretched in sports – an important part of the school curriculum.

In 1909, much to Subhas' relief, he was transferred to Ravenshaw Collegiate School. Bengali was a compulsory subject in the matriculation examination, the object towards which all of India's school education is directed: and in this Indian setting he was soon famous. His command of English distinguished him from most Bengali students, sports meant a few hours' ineffectual drill, and he had soon come to terms with the intricacies of the Bengali language (though he spoke Bengali at home he had received little formal instruction in it). His father's immense reputation had preceded his arrival at Ravenshaw and soon Subhas' stories were circulating widely. A Sanskrit teacher, questioned why he had awarded Subhas 100% of the marks, is said to have replied, 'Because I am not allowed to give him 110%.'

More crucially, there was Beni Madhav Das, the headmaster – the first true love of Subhas' adolescent life. He had first seen him on his headmasterly rounds and was almost immediately in deep, aching love. Das' remembered characteristics read like a description of the morally perfect man. He himself was much taken by the 'glow' around Subhas and was soon guiding this 'young budding rose' through the wonderfully mysterious ways of Hindu epics and legends. Something of a nature buff, he advised Subhas to reveal himself to nature – and for some years afterwards the adolescent searched out river banks, secluded hills and isolated meadows to commune with the elements. Best of all he loved to wander along the banks of the rivers round Cuttack devouring Washington's

Sketchbook, Mazzini's *Duties of Men*, Smiles' *The Secret of Success* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. If the scenic atmosphere matched the natural setting, he would recite poetry: Wordsworth, the fifth-century Sanskrit poet Kalidasa and the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

Soon, however, Das was transferred. Subhas wept unashamedly, and years later saw it as one of the most traumatic moments of his adolescence. Simultaneously nature revealed its limitations: sex reared its head. This was the start of what he would later describe as 'one of the stormiest periods in my physical life which was to last five or six years . . . a period of acute mental conflict causing untold suffering and agony'. Relief came from an unexpected source. One day while visiting a neighbour's home he chanced upon some books by a Hindu monk. As with Das, there was an immediate conversion: Subhas, just turned fifteen, had discovered Narandranath Datta, known to worshipping Indians as Swami Vivekananda. His muscular Hinduism explained India's colonial status; his sexual balm quietened the demon that was ravaging Subhas. Borrowing Western terms, Vivekananda explained India's subjugation at the hands of the British in terms of a recent spiritual and ideological failure. There had been a Hindu Eden but this Eden had been corrupted. It could only be regained if Hindus would revive Vedanta (literally the last of the Vedas, Hindu India's most revered books). Hinduism was scientific, it was rational, it was a religion for all men, it was the salvation for a world desperate to find a magic cure for its problems. India might be materially poor and technologically backward, but she was spiritually rich, able with her scientific Hinduism and her rational Yoga to save the 'sick' West. But, Vivekananda argued, she also had to learn much from the West: self-confidence, viability, skills, above all power. And he advised his followers to play football as diligently as they read the Vedas. Subhas collected as much of Vivekananda as he could.

Though in later years he would transcend much of this thinking and involve himself with the more universal ideas of nationalism and socialism, something of Vivekananda's muscular Hinduism would always cling to him. In Mandalay Jail he would sketch out, in his prison notebook, plans to spread Hinduism to Africa as a crusading, proselytising religion with a zest and influence to match those of Islam and Christianity. This, he noted, was how Christianity and

Islam had created empires and converted millions, and it could be the key to India's greatness. Vivekananda's work displayed an interesting mixture of two great Bengali religious traditions, *vaishnava* (roughly 'love') and *shakti* (roughly 'strength'), and Bose would always remain wedded to both.

The sexual balm was more immediately relevant. Hindu ambivalence about sex is well-known. Explicitly erotic inscriptions and paintings co-exist quite happily with sustained attempts to deny that sex exists. In the land of the *Kama Sutra* people furtively read *Fanny Hill*. Scholars and historians have suggested an answer in the wreck that is Hindu history and the numerous defeats suffered by the Hindus over the centuries. Reforming Hinduism, perhaps answering the prudery of the Victorians (who were horrified by much of ancient Hindu eroticism), added a new and unexpected twist. The young Ramakrishna (Vivekananda's guru) had spied on women bathing at his village pond; the grown Ramakrishna, married to a young girl, found sexual cohabitation impossible. Often convulsed by hallucinations and fits, he could only come to terms with his wife by treating her as a mother, a representation of the great goddess of strength Kali. Vivekananda, developing Ramakrishna, saw in celibacy the answer to sex: every young man was encouraged to think of every woman as his mother – or, failing that, as his sister.

This was the balm Subhas was looking for, and he decided that he too would become a celibate. But the demon was not that easily frustrated, and the more Subhas tried, the stronger the urge became. Years later, during his exile in Europe and enjoying the company of European women, he would doubt whether the whole exercise had been worthwhile.

Vivekananda had preached a bastard socialism: help the poor, the poor are God. Subhas, with about ten friends, formed a Sechaa Seva Sangh (Volunteer Service Corps) at school that went round Cuttack looking after smallpox and cholera victims and every Sunday distributed free rice to poor students living in a rent-free hostel. Social work on this scale in India was limited to missionaries, and when Subhas and his volunteers visited villages near the city they encountered hostility: affluent young men were not supposed to do such things, though some villagers rationalised it by suggesting that it was all part of the accepted Hindu practice of accumulating religious 'merit'.

These activities were soon being conducted in a more structured setting. Through a schoolfriend Subhas met Hementa Sarkar, a boy of about his age who lived in Calcutta but was visiting Cuttack. At this stage Hementa's ideas had developed rather more than Subhas', and he belonged to a formal Calcutta group which had a *dada* (literally 'older brother', but used as a term of respect in Bengali). Soon Subhas was to become part of this group. Hementa Sarkar has provided an interesting, if sickly-sentimental, recollection of his first meeting with Subhas – one of the few first-hand descriptions of the young adolescent:

> I was sitting in the drawing room of Gopal Chandra Ganguly. At that time a fair, thin, spectacled boy arrived. As soon as I saw him, I felt I was looking at the boy who would bring freedom to India. His face showed that he had a firm determination. He told me: 'Beni Madhav Das wrote to me that you will stay in our house.' I replied: 'Brother, you all are rich. A poor man like me can't stay there.' His eyes instantly filled with tears, and he said: 'You have insulted me by saying that I was born with a silver spoon, but have I personally committed any crime?' Then we started talking.

Subhas' life was dominated by two great personal friendships. His friendship with Hementa lasted till 1924, when there was a breach. By that time another friend, Dilip Roy, had emerged, and he would remain to the end. To Dilip and Hementa Subhas would deny nothing. They would be his confidants, sounding-boards and confessors, and very simply the only persons in whose company he could relax and just be himself.

Though the times were revolutionary (Curzon's decision to partition Bengal had sparked the first nationalist agitation in India, ranging from boycott of British goods to the growth of secret revolutionary societies), Subhas was unaffected. He had enthusiastically joined in the celebrations marking George V's Durbar in Delhi, knew little of wider political movements and rarely discussed politics at home. The turmoil that Vivekananda had caused made him turn to religion and his mother. In an extraordinary series of letters, probably written during the winter of 1912–3 (when he was fifteen) he expressed his bewilderment and anguish. He wrote of

vegetarianism, of the proof of God's existence (in terms that would have done Billy Graham proud), of the difference between humans and animals, of the wretched state of India ('God's country'), of the depressing prevalence of sin, and of his own personal failure to do anything:

> Mother, how much longer shall we sleep? How much longer shall we go on playing with non-essentials? Shall we continue to turn a deaf ear to the wailings of our nation? Our ancient religion is suffering the pangs of near death – does that not stir our hearts? How long can one sit with folded arms and watch this state of our country and religion? One cannot wait any more – one cannot sleep any more – we must now shake off our stupor and lethargy and plunge into action. But, alas! How many selfless sons of the Mother are prepared, in this selfish age, to completely give up their personal interests and take the plunge for the Mother? Mother, is this son of yours yet ready?

We do not know how his mother reacted, but Vivekananda's influence had begun to take its toll: his studies had been affected and *bhadralok* society was outraged.

Bhadralok literally means gentle people, and its nearest English equivalent would perhaps be 'gentry'. In Bengal it defined a whole cluster of higher castes – Brahmans, Kayasthas, Vaidyas – who shunned manual labour and created for themselves bastions of privilege, power and status from which they could look down upon *abadra*, or *chotolok* – literally small people, but in colloquial Bengali the term has a more abusive meaning: it is equivalent to 'bastard'. The two *loks* (groups of people) represented the deeper divisions within the Bengali Hindu caste system; and, though the Raj would later explain its political problems in terms of the revolt by the *bhadraloks*, the *bhadraloks* themselves were most comfortable during British rule in Bengal. They formed a middle-class dedicated to success yet unwilling to sacrifice security, eager to accept the benefits of British rule but keen to maintain ancient privileges – a class that practised, with remarkable success, the Hindu work ethic:

Porasuno kora jey
Gari gora chorey shey

(Those why study hard
Get to ride in carriages).

This old *bhadralok* ditty is still dinned into most upper- and middle-class Bengali students, and Subhas must have heard it. His father had engaged four tutors to prod his scholastic efforts, but their efforts could make no impression on an adolescent who was convinced that Vivekananda had all the answers. By the time the matriculation examinations arrived Jankinath was resigned to what looked like a grievous loss to the *bhadralok* ethic.

The results, however, were a delightful surprise. Subhas came second, and his parents decided he must continue his studies for a degree at Presidency College, Calcutta – one of British India's most prestigious colleges. He started there in the monsoon of 1913, at the age of sixteen and a half. He had no particular idea of what he wanted to do.

Calcutta meant new influences. In particular there was Aurobindo – leader, so the British said, of the revolutionary movement that had ravaged Bengal a few years before. Developing Vivekananda's muscular Hinduism, he had recycled myths to further his own concept of nationalism. Like Vivekananda he argued that what India needed was strength: physical, mental and moral, but above all spiritual. Though Aurobindo, fearing the British, had exiled himself to French Pondicherry in the south – and openly renounced politics for the status of a master – he was still a potent figure and his writings were avidly collected and read in Calcutta. Inevitably legends grew up that in time he would come and liberate India; but Subhas was more interested in Aurobindo's abstruse philosophical writings on yoga and the gathering of the 'inner cosmic forces'. As he delved further into them, he became convinced that he needed a guru. He had searched for gurus in Cuttack, but they had proved unsatisfactory, and the Calcutta ones were either mercenary or part of bureaucratic organisations. So, in the summer of 1914, soon after his first academic year at Presidency had ended, he borrowed some money from a friend and, accompanied by another, left for northern India – that great supermarket of Indian gurus. The pair made a grand tour of Hinduism's holy places; and, while his family searched frantically, consulted astrologers and sent uncles and relations to look for him, Subhas encountered the unacceptable face of Hinduism.

Some *sadhus* suspected them of being Bengali revolutionaries disguising themselves as mystics; at a Hardwar eating house they were not served because, as Bengalis, they were considered dirty; at another, food was eaten separately by the different castes, and the village well that the Brahmans used to draw water from could not be defiled by non-Brahmans. By the time he arrived at Benares Subhas was thoroughly disillusioned and was easily persuaded by Swami Brahmananda, a friend of the family, to return home.

There followed emotional scenes. Then, probably weakened by his journey, Subhas fell ill with typhoid; the First World War broke out and the debate about a spiritual guru came to an end. Years later, in his autobiography, he would call this the moment of change. A nation's life could not be divided into watertight religious and political compartments.

Probably he simplified. The search for a guru went on. But it would be many years before he found one, and then the guru would be a full-fledged politician.

2

THE REBELLION

Subhas returned to his studies and Calcutta determined to play the good *bhadralok*. He was, he told Hementa, keen to get a first in philosophy in the B.A.(Hons) course. Soon Western rationalism had begun to dent the papier-mâché façade of Vedic beliefs and Vivekanandian rationalisations. If the mystic had produced one revolution, Western logic was to produce another and far-reaching one. Subhas took an active part in flood-relief programmes, produced a college magazine and was soon organising debates as a method of promoting Indian self-reliance. 'We Indians are too dependent on others for actions, views, initiative, everything. So I have decided that debating classes have got to stimulate us to stand on our own legs.'

By August 1915 he was already confident that 'I have a definite mission to fulfil in life for which I have been born and I am not to drift in the current of popular opinion.' Within a few months these ambitions were thrown into relief by an incident of distinct political significance – one that Subhas would later call the turning-point of his life.

It involved Edward Farley Oaten, Professor of History at Presidency College. In the Indian reconstruction of the event Oaten has become the great rogue. Indian nationalist historians have no doubt that Oaten represented all that was obnoxious in British rule. But, even if we accept that, there is no clear consensus as to what Subhas did.

On 10 January 1916 some students in Subhas' class were involved in a corridor altercation with Oaten, who claimed they were wil-

fully disrupting his teaching by making noise as they passed. Subhas, as the representative of his class on the newly elected students' consultative committee, took up the matter with the principal, Henry R. James. James suggested the two sides made up; but the time had long since passed for such a simple solution. Outside the college, blows were being exchanged in Calcutta tram-cars, and Indians ejected from reserved seats in trains were fighting back. The students at Presidency went on strike. James imposed a fine and the strike was called off. But, despite a meeting between Oaten and the students, the situation remained explosive. On 15 February there was a repetition of the corridor incident. This time one of the students alleged that Oaten had called him a rascal and boxed his ears. That afternoon at about three, as Oaten came down to the ground floor to pin up a cricket notice, he was quickly surrounded by some boys and beaten: 'brutally assaulted' said the government committee which investigated the matter; Oaten, fifty-five years later, recalled only 'a few bruises'. The whole thing was over in less than a minute.

Subhas probably planned and master-minded the attack – but did he actually take part himself? And, if he did, was he the one who attacked Oaten from behind? In his autobiography Subhas claimed only to be an 'eyewitness'. Years later, asked by his nephew Amiya whether he actually did assault Oaten, he smiled enigmatically. (The argument is itself revealing about attitudes towards Bose. That Subhas took a leading part in avenging a British insult ties in neatly with his subsequent role as Netaji – putative liberator of India. But, if he did, he may have hit Oaten from behind, and that would not help foster the image of Subhas the chivalrous hero and fighter.)

James himself had no doubts about Subhas' role and, with the help of a bearer called Bansilal (there always seems to be a Bansilal in Calcutta's schools, colleges and clubs), easily proved him guilty. Bansilal – who claimed to have witnessed the assault – sat on a stool behind a small screen in James' room. As Subhas walked in, Bansilal identified him. James is said to have said, 'Bose, you are the most troublesome man in the college. I suspend you.' The governing body quickly confirmed the suspension.

Subhas, banking on his reputation as a good student and on his acquaintance with those who mattered in the Calcutta educational

hierarchy, thought Bansilal's 'weak evidence' could be overturned by the committee of enquiry that had been set up to inquire into the affair and the relationship between Presidency College and its students. But the committee was more concerned with the larger iceberg of student discipline and education politics of which this incident was just the tip; and, in passing, approved the college's action. The university refused him permission to study at any other college. So far Subhas had held up well under the strain, but now he confessed to Hementa that his mental state was 'not good. I do not know if I shall survive this.'

Writing his autobiography twenty years later he was less aware of his youthful doubts, and saw this as the moment when he 'had a foretaste of leadership – though in a very restricted sphere – and of the martyrdom it involves. In short, I had acquired character and could face the future with equanimity.'

Either way, Calcutta was not a safe place for students; many had been arrested, including some from Presidency. Sarat (or 'Mejdada', the Bengali term that Subhas used to denote his elder brother), who in this crisis had played the first of his many father-figure roles, decided that Subhas would be better off in Cuttack. *Bhadralok* society had finally extracted a price for rebellion.

Efforts, however, were continuously made to enable Subhas to return to college. After a year the university authorities indicated they would withdraw his suspension provided he could secure a place at a college. Subhas decided to try his luck at Scottish Church College. He found the principal, Dr Urquhart, a likeable man, and Dr Urquhart in turn was impressed by Subhas. In July 1917 Subhas resumed his studies.

Scottish Church was a world removed from Presidency. Urquhart was a man of philosophy, his Bible classes were excellent and Subhas, quieter and more reflective, took his studies very seriously. The only luxury he permitted himself was military training. He had applied to join the recently formed 49th Bengalees but failed the eye test. Some Indians had successfully petitioned the government to allow a University Corps, and the university provided a military unit as part of the territorial army. This supplied a deeply felt Subhas need; it was the answer to the British slander that Bengalis could not fight. Bose, in fact, accepted the British view of the Bengali, but he was determined to provide a remedy. This could

only come, he was convinced, through military service: there lay strength, decisiveness and the final answer to Macaulay's jibe about the effete *babus*. Muscular Hinduism and India's special role could then be wedded to modern European organisation.

There is an early photograph taken while he was training, possibly at Belghoria when the unit set up a camp there for some time. It shows a young man in military shorts reclining on the grass with his rifle across his shoulders: there is an unmistakable look of childish pleasure and naive happiness on the bespectacled face.

In April 1919 Subhas sat for his final graduation exams. He had worked hard, selected likely questions from previous papers and discussed matters with his friend Bholanath Roy, who already knew what the exam was all about. Though he did very well in two of his favourite subjects – History of Philosophy and Essay – he was not happy with his performance in others. This probably cost him the first place, and he had to be content with the second place in the university. However, he had hardly settled down to it when suddenly his father, who was in Calcutta, summoned him. He found Sarat with him there. They had decided that he should sit for the Indian Civil Service exam in England and gave him twenty-four hours in which to make up his mind.

The 'ICS' was the greatest examination of the Raj. It attracted the best talents and was considered to be the toughest; success meant entry to the 'heaven-born' service, the steel frame that ruled the Raj and promised a lifetime of power, glory and luxurious security. Subhas' carefully laid plans collapsed. He did not want to serve the British, certainly not to be an instrument of their Raj, and this was not how he wanted to go to England. He had set his heart on the Tripos, which he thought would help him in the educational career he had set as his goal. But already it was late August, and no Cambridge college would accept him now.

A trip to England, however, was too tempting an offer to be refused and, convinced he would not pass the ICS and the crisis would never arise, he agreed. There was some problem in getting a passport (the police knew about him), but through contacts in high places this was smoothed out, and on 15 September 1919 he left Kidderpore Docks for England aboard the SS *The City of Calcutta*. He arrived at Tilbury on a cold, wet, dark winter day made more depressing by the news from the universities. There was, said the

adviser of Indian students, no hope; none of his relations had been to Oxbridge, and he was horribly late.

Fortunately for him, Dilip was already at Fitzwilliam, then a non-collegiate body affiliated to Cambridge, and by early November Subhas was able to settle down.

Within three weeks of his arrival, he wrote to Hementa:

> Whether one wills it or not, the climate of this country makes people energetic. The activity you see is most heartening. Every man is conscious of the value of time and there is a method in all that goes on. Nothing makes me happier than to be served by the whites and to watch them clean my shoes. Students here have a status and the way the professors treat them is different. One could see here how man should treat his fellow man. They have many faults – but in many matters you have to respect them for their virtues.

There was much to learn from the English:

> The natives of this country have certain qualities which have made them so great. First they can work strictly to time with clock-work precision, secondly, they have a robust optimism – we think more of the sorrows of life, they think more of the happy and bright things of life. Then they have a strong common sense – they appreciate national interest very well!

Simple things delighted him. There were no police to watch students, he could buy books on credit at Cambridge bookshops, and there was the excitement of debate, both at the university and in Parliament. But he could never forget that the English were the masters of his country. One American scholar has sought to explain this ambivalence in terms of the 'good-boy–bad-boy' syndrome: Subhas Bose wanted to rebel against authority yet win its approval. This would explain everything: the revolt against parental authority, against *bhadralok* society, against the British, even against Gandhi. But the explanation must be resisted. There may well be psychological explanations, but his ambivalence towards the British was the classical product of the distortions of colonial rule, the necessary contradictions of imperial power.

Living in this alien world, his nationalism deepened. No Indian weaknesses were to be exhibited. The English must be made to realise that Indians, too, had all the desired English qualities: morality, sense of values, dedication. 'We must prove it to them that we are their superiors. We must beard the lion in his den,' he told Dilip. So, when he discovered Dilip sitting cross-legged in his rooms wrapped in a *dhoti*, he was furious. What would the English think of this strange Indian custom?

Subhas of course was always upright, totally dedicated, completely sincere: he would make even the most hackneyed of clichés sound like newly discovered *mots*. He was also, of course, terribly priggish; his books were always in place, his clothes were always neat and pressed – and he was quite simply terrified of sex. Here in this slightly more sexually liberated society all his Vivekananda guards were firmly up. Only one woman managed to break through – Mrs Dharmavir, the English wife of a Punjabi doctor practising in Lancashire. She was some years older, and in need of some protection from her nationalist husband's provocative taunts about the British. She became 'Didi' – older sister, that convenient category created by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The balm worked. With her Subhas would form a deep, affectionate, platonic relationship. As he sailed away from England he would write and explain to her his shyness with women. Years later, when the Dharmavirs returned to India, Didi's house in the Himalayas would be a convenient retreat.

In July 1920 Subhas sat for the ICS examination. Despite his hard work he went into the exam with misgivings and at the end of it wrote to his parents to expect the worst. When the results were announced in mid-September he discovered to his great joy that he had come fourth. But he was now faced with the most crucial choice of his *bhadralok* life: should he rebel or finally surrender? Subhas turned to the one person he knew would not fail him: 'Mejdada' – Sarat. In the years to come 'Mejdada' would be his banker, guide, friend and confessor, now he would act as a go-between with the family which could not understand and would not approve.

Indeed, his father was aghast. Back and forth the letters went for seven months. By mid-January Subhas had edged towards a decision. Suddenly he had found a man who stirred his imagination:

C.R. Das. Das had been one of the greatest lawyers in Calcutta, able to command briefs and fees of his own choosing. But when, in response to the repressive Rowlatt Acts, Gandhi had made his call for non-co-operation, Das had followed. He had sacrificed his practice and his fine Western clothes, taken to Gandhi's ordained *khadi* and led the non-co-operation movement in Bengal. This was the example Subhas was looking for. He wrote to Sarat:

> If C.R. Das at his age can give up everything and face the uncertainties of life – I am sure a young man like myself who has no wordly cares to trouble him is much more capable of doing so. . . . A life of sacrifice to start with, plain living and high thinking, whole-hearted devotion to the country's cause – all these are highly enchanting to my imagination and inclination. Further, the very principle of serving under an alien bureaucracy is intensely repugnant to me.

In February Subhas wrote to Das offering his services: he could be a journalist on a nationalist paper, a village worker or even a teacher in the national schools being set up, and he precociously offered his own ideas on what the Congress – already the main nationalist party in India – should do. It should have a permanent house, announce policies for native states (those ruled by Indian princes) and depressed Hindu castes, maintain a permanent bureau with its own research and study wings and set up an intelligence department for collecting information and organising publicity and propaganda. The Congress in 1921 never even knew these revolutionary chores existed.

Das, realising the gem he was being presented with, accepted with alacrity. There was much to do and there were not enough capable men. On 22 April 1921 Subhas Bose resigned from the ICS. It had taken him eight months to decide. He completed his Tripos in June, borrowed £90 from Dilip (he feared his father would not lend him any more money) and sailed for India later that month. Travelling on the boat with him was Rabindranath Tagore, and the two discussed the new political movements sweeping India. They were both convinced that a new man had emerged, using what seemed like a revolutionary method. The man was Gandhi, the method non-violence. But Subhas was still not very certain what his role in

this movement would be. He could join the Ramakrishna Mission, or teach at Tagore's university. Whatever it was, his life had irrevocably changed. On the day he refused the ICS he had written to Charu Ganguly:

> You are aware that once before I sailed on the sea of life at the call of duty. The ship has now reached a port offering great allurement – where power, property and wealth are at my command. But, the response from the innermost corner of my heart is – 'You will not find happiness in this. The way to your happiness lies in your dancing around with the surging waves of the ocean.'
>
> Today, in response to that call, I am sailing forth again with the helm in His Hands. Only He knows where the ship will land. . . . Let us see what happens.

The revolt was complete.

S.C.E.R.T., West Bengal
Date 2.3.92
Acc No. 52

PART II

THE MYSTICAL HERO

There is nothing that lures me more than a life of adventure away from the beaten track, and in search of the unknown. In this life there may be suffering, but there is joy as well; there may be hours of darkness but there are also hours of dawn. To this path I call my countrymen.

Subhas Bose's inscription on an autograph given at Vithalnagar, Haripura, on 23 February 1938, and quoted in Dilip Roy's *The Subhas I Knew*

3

AT LAST: THE GURU

'The career of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose', writes Christopher Sykes in *Troubled Loyalty* 'is most easily seen as a cautionary tale about the dangers of a narrow mind, of dedicating life to one obsessional hatred, of the blindness induced by fanaticism and irrational self-confidence.' It is the latest expression of an old-established view of the English Right. We have already examined the wider contradictions and failure of this view. Here, as Subhas Bose prepares to enter the political field, let us pause to consider an example of extreme English nationalism which would have a far-reaching effect on Indian nationalism.

The event in question is the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre. Like Lidice or Sharpeville, it defines a certain moment in time and explains a whole range of historical events. Before Jallianwalla Indian collaborators could live in peace with their consciences; after Jallianwalla Bagh there could be no compromise on basic issues.

Curiously, the massacre occurred in the middle of the Raj's search for more reliable collaborators. The Raj had always depended on collaborators. It was physically and economically impossible to run India without them. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shrewd alliances with Indian princes, local satraps and village, district and religious strong men had produced reliable, efficient collaborators who saw in British rule a guarantee for their own increasingly archaic feudalism. But by the beginning of the twentieth century the collaborators were themselves becoming archaic. New modes of production had produced the inevitable socio-economic changes; a new class of educated people had poured forth

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Curiously, the massacre occurred in the middle of the Raj's search for more reliable collaborators. The Raj had always depended on collaborators. It was physically and economically impossible to run India without them. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shrewd alliances with Indian princes, local satraps and village, district and religious strong men had produced reliable, efficient collaborators who saw in British rule a guarantee for their own increasingly archaic feudalism. But by the beginning of the twentieth century the collaborators were themselves becoming archaic. New modes of production had produced the inevitable socio-economic changes; a new class of educated people had poured forth

from the Macaulay-inspired educational system, quoting John Stuart Mill and believing in English liberal capitalism. A more sophisticated approach to collaboration was required.

When the First World War made the need urgent, a wider scheme was discussed. India responded magnificently to the war. Thousands of Indians who had never heard of Mesopotamia or Gallipoli happily went off to fight there, and Gandhi won the Kaisar-e-Hind for 'loyally' getting Indians to enlist. In 1917 Edwin Montagu made his much-trumpeted declaration promising 'responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire'; and in 1919 the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, providing for elections to provincial councils with some local powers, were introduced. The reforms meant little, but they impressed Indian collaborators, and Jankinath Bose was convinced India would have 'home rule' within ten years. (There was no consensus, either among the Indians or the British, what the term 'home rule' meant, or how Montagu's declaration would work in practice, if ever.)

But the Raj had also been concerned with the growing revolutionary movement, which in the years between 1910 and 1915 had come within an ace of uprooting it, as the Bengal government later admitted. Particularly strong in the Punjab and Bengal, it had been curbed only with the free use of the notorious Defence of India Act. With the war over and the Act about to die, the panicky Raj (it did not take much to panic the Raj) decided to retain all of it under a new name: the Rowlatt Acts, named after the judge whose committee had recommended this ingenious remedy. All the repressive powers of the war remained intact: press censorship, power to ban meetings, arrests without warrants. For many Indians ready to believe that the Montagu–Chelmsford reforms would eventually lead to 'responsible' Indian government, the Rowlatt Acts revealed the deeper imperial purpose.

Gandhi called for *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Acts, shrewdly aligning himself with a cause dear to many Indian Muslims. This curious but strong alliance produced the beginnings of a mass movement in India. By April 1919 the Raj was facing its gravest crisis since it had brutally crushed the revolt of 1857. (Subhas Bose always called this the First Indian War of Independence, and bristled if anybody referred to it as the Indian Mutiny.)

In Amritsar, key to the vital Punjab, which supplied the best

fighters and the most efficient collaborators, a nervous, timid Deputy Commissioner named Miles Irving panicked. There had been *hartals* (the *hartal* was a brilliantly effective Indian form of strike in which almost everything in a particular place would come to a halt), marches and demonstrations; but no violence. Irving nevertheless, instructed by the Punjab government, spirited away two of the Punjab's best-loved leaders. There was violence in the region, and on 13 April 1919 Amritsar was handed over to Brigadier-General Dyer, commander of the Jullunder Brigade. He immediately imposed martial law; but, even as his soldiers went round the city drumming the news, he heard of a massive meeting being held at Jallianwalla Bagh. Immensely pleased that the 'rebels' had played into his hands, he hurried there with troops and armoured cars. Jallianwalla Bagh was (and is) a large open space with a single very narrow entrance. When Dyer arrived he found more than twenty thousand men, women and children listening, as contentedly as they would in any Indian political meeting, to their leaders. It made little or no impression on Dyer that the crowd were completely unarmed and contained many women and children. He found the entrance too narrow for his armoured cars, so he abandoned them there, ordered his troops to block the entrance and, without any warning, opened fire. 'I made up my mind I would do all the men to death if they were going the continue the meeting', he would later tell the Hunter Commission of Enquiry. But his men ran out of ammunition after 337 men, forty-one women and a baby of seven weeks had been killed, and 1,500 people injured. (The Congress would later assert that over a thousand were killed.)

Dyer, in fact, went on to inflict some remarkable punishments: Indian suspects were flogged, and Indians passing through a certain street where an English missionary woman had been beaten were made to crawl on their hands and knees. The Hunter Committee found that Dyer's deeds were 'inhuman and un-British', Dyer was eventually made to leave the Army and Churchill – Secretary of State for War – condemned Dyer's action, in a stormy House of Commons debate, as a 'monstrous event'. The debate, in fact, developed into a 'get Montagu' witch-hunt – Montagu then being Secretary of State for India. In fact, ugly overtones of anti-Indian sentiments fused with anti-Semitic ones (Montagu was a Jew). Though Montagu won, 129 members of the House supported

Dyer; and in the Lords a motion deploring the government's action against Dyer was passed by 129 to 86. The editor of the *Morning Post* collected a fund of £28,000 for him and many Britons in India and England acclaimed him as a hero.

For Gandhi, Nehru (both father Motilal and son Jawaharlal), Das and a whole host of others there could now be no turning back.

Bose's ship arrived in Bombay on 16 July, and the very same afternoon he presented himself at Gandhi's headquarters at Mani Bhawan in the fairly posh locality of Bombay's Chowpati. He felt distinctly awkward. He was the only one in a Western suit in a sea of home-made *khadi* (or *khaddar* – the words are interchangeable). Full of revolutionary lore and the methods and tactics of European nationalists, he eagerly sought answers to questions that were worrying him.

Gandhi easily answered how his campaign would finally lead to the non-payment of taxes. (As the government took action against boycott of foreign cloth, the time would come for disobeying the government and marching to prison. The prisons would overflow, and non-payment of taxes would come then.) But Bose was less satisfied with the Gandhian answer as to how India would get freedom – and that too within a year. He had expected Gandhi to plan his boycott movement in such a way that there would be distress in Lancashire, thereby bringing pressure on the British Parliament and the Cabinet. But Gandhi seemed to believe in some sort of change of heart. Bose, disappointed, went off to Calcutta.

> Though I tried to persuade myself at that time there must have been a lack of understanding on my part, my reason told me clearly again and again that there was a deplorable lack of clarity in the plan which the Mahatma had formulated and that he himself did not have a clear idea of the successive stages of the campaign which would bring India to her cherished goal of freedom.

Too much, perhaps, ought not to be read into this estimate of Gandhi, which was written in 1934 when his differences with Gandhi were already sharp. But the fact remains that Gandhi's magic had not worked with Bose. Subhas would refer to Gandhi as

'Gandhiji' or 'Mahatmaji' ('Ji' is a term of respect) – never 'Bapu ('Father'), the expression almost obligatory for Gandhians and popularised by Jawaharlal Nehru. Bose respected Gandhi; he did not worship him. That was reserved for the guru he had so long sought: C.R. Das.

Hementa was well established as Das' private secretary, and soon after Bose arrived back at 38/2 Elgin Road (his former home in Calcutta) he was taken to meet him. His first acquaintance was with Basanti Devi, Das' wife, of whom we shall hear more later. But, when he finally did meet Das, Bose was immediately captivated. He saw in him all the qualities he had long searched for. He was a man of intellect and reason who was also emotional; a lawyer who was also a poet and a man of letters; and, above all, a man of total commitment: an Indian patriot who felt deeply about Bengal.

In some ways Das remains a curious choice of guru. Gandhi was more of a social revolutionary. It was Gandhi's social insights that were close to those Subhas would himself develop. But Bose's turning-away from Gandhi was part of the wider quarrel that the children of the Bengali renaissance had with the Mahatma. Gandhi could not be accommodated in the vision of Bengal Bose had long preserved, and which Das also held. Though Das ended his life as a mass politician, he was essentially a man of the establishment who disagreed with it on certain issues and used mass campaigns in limited spells to get better terms. A product of the Raj, he turned – almost in desperation – all his civilised fury against it; but he always hoped that there could be a middle way.

Like all shrewd political operators Das was a broker of men. His achievement was to bring together people of conflictingly different views, get them to agree on a common minimum programme and weld them together in a coalition that was as remarkable for its diversity as for its strength. The coalition would not long outlive Das, but, while it did, it provided a wonderful sight and in retrospect a golden age of strength and unity. Men who would dominate Bengal politics till the end of the 1950s, well after the Raj had disappeared, all grew up under him.

Gandhi's field was different. He was the first mass all-India leader to appear on the scene. Before him there had only been regional leaders: satraps prominent at the national level because of powerfully organised regional caucuses. Gandhi changed all that. He

broke through regional, linguistic and caste barriers: after his rise no regional caucus could be sure of its hold, no satrap confident that his men would not break. And, shrewdly sensing that a continental organisation was necessary to fight the Raj, he modelled the Congress in the image of the Raj he fought. Offices in villages, towns, wards and cities led upwards to district committees; they in turn led to provincial ones, until finally, at the apex, sat the All-India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C., the Congress Parliament) that met at regular intervals and made policy. Implementation was in the hands of the Congress executive, known as the Working Committee – which, because of the power it exercised, was soon christened the Congress High Command. At the same time as this organisational structuring Gandhi drafted almost every clause of the Congress constitution, set out the qualifications for membership, and sought to bring in the masses by keeping the membership levy down to four annas and by holding the annual sessions in a semi-rustic setting. The first proper Indian political party had been formed: a model that survives intact even today.

But the regional satraps of Bengal were among the principal ones to be displaced. During Bose's childhood the Bengali politician had been able to boast, 'What Bengal thinks today India thinks tomorrow.' Bengal had created Indian nationalism and taught it to the rest of India; now Gandhi's take-over jeopardised all that. Das had watched it warily, and though he did join Gandhi he would always remain a critic and finally break with him. Gandhi would never completely control Bengal, and through much Bengali nationalism a strain of 'We wuz robbed by Gandhians' developed; persisting even today, it partly explains the precarious post-Independence hold Congress had had over the province, and the rise of Bengali Marxism.

The argument was not merely about power. Ideology was also involved. The Bengali definition of Indian nationalism was based on trying to use Western methods to reform Indian systems. It sought a synthesis between East and West. Gandhi preferred to use religion to further nationalism. Recycling Hindu myths, he sought to recreate Ramrajya – a mythical Hindu Eden: a land of peace, prosperity and primitive agricultural bliss where there were no modern inventions and no worries about equality. The poor would trust the rich; the rich would be kind and benevolent towards the

poor. A few simple things would govern the Eden. *Charka* – spinning cloth on a little hand spinning-wheel; *satyagraha*; *khadi*.

But, for all the apparent humility with which these ideas were propounded, there was a strong element of totalitarian force, as in any movement based on myths. Gandhi wanted complete, unquestioning obedience to his creed. That, he said, was essential if Swaraj (independence) was to be obtained; and Gandhiji's Swaraj seemed rigidly ascetic, intolerantly puritanical and quite opposed to the sensual, culturally more liberal Bengali version that was part of Bose's heritage. Tagore, returning to India at the same time, wrote: 'Today in the atmosphere of the country there is a spirit of persecution, which is not that of armed force, but something still more alarming because it is invisible'. Bose, although he agreed with Gandhi that in the present conditions in India a national movement against the British was inevitable, shared Tagore's doubts about the final value of Gandhism.

Das was greatly taken by the earnest, totally dedicated young man, and within a week of their meeting he appointed Bose secretary of his publicity board. One of Bose's first tasks was to organise a national college in opposition to the Raj's educational institutions. This was just the sort of work he was looking for and he took up the principalship of the college earnestly. He got his old Presidency and Scottish Church contacts to lecture. He mapped out courses, planned timetables, thought of taking a few philosophy classes himself, and set out detailed guidelines for the benefit of the lecturers.

Publicity, however, covered a much wider field than this. It meant a battle with the government's awesome machinery, much of the established press and a great many collaborators increasingly worried about the sweep of Gandhi's campaign. Soon Bose was organising picketing of shops selling foreign goods in south Calcutta. He and his volunteers, marching through such well-known Bengali middle-class localities as Jogoo Babu's Bazar, Russa Theatre (now Purna Theatre) and Russa Road, became a regular – and, for shopkeepers intent on stocking 'foreign', not always a welcome – sight. The climax of this frenetic activity came on 17 November 1921, the day the Prince of Wales, emulating his grandfather, arrived in Bombay.

Ostensibly the Prince's visit was to thank India for its generous

support during the war, privately the Raj hoped that once again the anodyne of British monarchy and its supposed benevolent paternalism would turn Indians away from Gandhi and his movement. The Congress were determined to resist, and on the day of his arrival in India, Gandhi declared a complete *hartal*. In Calcutta, Bose acted as Das' chief of staff. He arranged for the transportation of volunteers from Howrah and Sealdah, Calcutta's two main railway stations, to the place of the demonstration, and saw to it that the whole city had a holiday. The government, hitherto relaxed, now acted swiftly: the Congress and allied volunteer organisations were banned and meetings were prohibited. Das, reacting slowly, decided to offer selective *satyagraha*. Groups of Congressmen would go out in the streets, try to sell *khaddar* and if arrested offer no resistance. If this worked, the jails would be full and the government paralysed. Both sides were working towards a target.

The Prince was due to visit Calcutta on 24 December. Das decided that six volunteers – two Bengalis, two Marwaris and two Muslims, representing nearly all the major communities of Calcutta – would sell *khaddar* and call for *hartal* that day. Bose was asked to organise the volunteers. But the police refused to rise to the bait. Every evening a grim Subhas would report to Das.

'Well, Subhas, how many are arrested?'

'None yet, sir.'

Das decided to send first his son, then his wife Basanti and finally his sister Urmilla to jail. Bose was horrified. Women were meant to be protected, looked after, succoured, and Basanti Devi was well on her way to becoming a substitute mother for him. For long hours he argued, but Das held firm. The plan worked brilliantly, but even after Basanti had been released and had returned home Bose was not appeased. She recalled:

> His face was black with anger. I could see that Subhas had not yet calmed down. I laughed and told him, 'It is all right now. I have come back – so do be quiet.' Subhas slowly quietened down and then started weeping profusely. He wept like a child and I could gauge some of the endless love he had for me.

Now volunteers poured into Congress offices everywhere, demanding *satyagraha* opportunities, and three days later the

government took steps to crush the movement. Das and most of his lieutenants were arrested. The police also enquired about Bose. In the evening he rang up the Commissioner of Police, Lalbazar. 'I am told you enquired of me. Do you mean to arrest me? I am now ready.' Bose was taken away and quickly sentenced by the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta to six months in jail. As he was led away he is said to have asked — in what has become a famous remark — 'Only six months? Have I then robbed a fowl?'

In jail an old Chinese convict was frankly bewildered. Jail was a place for criminals, the dregs of society. But here were educated, well-off people, who ordinarily should never see the inside of a prison. For a long time the old Chinese wondered. At last he approached Bose and his group. He knew little English and asked haltingly, 'Opium? Opium? Opium?'

'No,' replied the young Congressmen.

'Cocaine? Cocaine? Cocaine?' persisted the Chinaman.

No again.

At last light dawned. 'Gandhi? Gandhi? Gandhi?'

Yes, nodded the Congressmen.

This was the first of Bose's eleven terms in British prisons and no other would be so joyful, so exciting. Frequent, unhindered interviews were allowed, and relations with the Raj were quite cordial. Bose revelled in it. He was given a cell next to Das' and was listed as his cook. Hemanta acted as Das' servant. Bose took his tasks seriously. Basanti Das visited Alipore Central Jail daily and Subhas was forever adding items to her shopping list. His culinary variations were endless and he exchanged eager notes on cooking with her.

While in prison he heard that Gandhi had decided to call off the campaign following violence in Chauri Chaura, a village in the United Provinces where angry villagers had set fire to the police station and killed some policemen. Though Gandhi's official reason was that it proved people were not ready for his type of non-violence, Bose concluded that this was a typical Gandhian way of presenting failure. The government, delighted at this unexpected reprieve, took full advantage of it, arrested Gandhi, jailed him for six years and put an end to the first nationalist movement for Indian independence.

Das, who had never really been happy with Gandhi's complete non-co-operation with the Raj, also seized the opportunity to

fashion a new programme. The Congress had so far completely boycotted the reformed councils set up under the Montagu–Chelmsford Act. But this boycott was under increasing strain, and Das argued that more could be achieved by getting elected to the councils and then wrecking the reforms.

For Gandhi nothing could have been more unnecessary and damaging. Non-co-operation could only succeed if it was total, all-embracing, and provided a complete alternative. But the quarrel between the two men has been pictured simply as a fight about how best to get Swaraj, the accepted creed of the Congress. The truth is that neither Gandhi nor Das defined Swaraj. Gandhi was more interested in his alternative vision of India, and would have lived with a constitutional link with Britain much short of freedom or even home rule; Das, for his part, used political movements to wrest concessions from the Raj, not destroy it. Though the reforms of 1919 were thoroughly inadequate in terms of broader Indian national aspirations, in local terms they provided rich pickings for collaborators. The Congress policy of council boycott meant that other politicians could use these local powers – whereas there were Congressmen itching to have these powers themselves. As in any national coalition of diverse groups, some had joined more for immediate gain than for the long-term goal. Non-co-operation strained their loyalty. Das shrewdly understood these strains within the organisation. Non-co-operation was dead. Gandhi was reduced to the spinning-wheel and the outer reaches of Hindu asceticism. Council entry, Das argued, would replace non-co-operation and hold the Congress together.

The fight with Gandhi meant a proper organisation, and Bose was assigned a crucial role. He was to organise, besides publicity, labour and a proper youth movement. The existing organisations were no more than debating-chambers: something truly vibrant and lively was necessary. Bose was released on 4 August 1922 and immediately set about his tasks. On the 6th he organised a meeting of young people, and by the middle of September enough progress had been made for the first All-Bengal Young Men's Conference to be held. Bose, evidently, made a very efective speech and the Conference unanimously adopted a resolution urging the removal of untouchability, the abolition of dowry and the prevention of early marriage.

Within a week the young men had an opportunity to put their enthusiasm into practice. Devastating floods ravaged four large Bengal districts. The Congress sent Bose to organise relief there, and in little over six weeks he set up the entire machinery. Living in tents pitched on the only available patches of dry highland, he organised the provision of food and shelter for the marooned thousands and fodder for the cattle capable of being rescued. Congress efforts had collected 400,000 rupees and, while he was there, Bose and his volunteer army were the only succour available.

Ordered by Das to return, he accompanied his chief to the annual session of the Congress. Das tried to get the Congress to adopt his council-entry plan. But, even without their leaders, the Gandhians defeated him by 203 votes to 87. When Das analysed the results he found he was in a minority even in his own province. He immediately resigned as president, and on 31 December 1922 he, Motilal, Nehru and a few others formed the Swaraj Party. Das vowed the Congress would accept his policies within a year and returned to Calcutta to wage war against the Congress establishment.

The first problem was the press. With the nationalist press now mostly pro-Gandhian, Das shrewdly used his power to influence rich people to start his own paper. Bose became editor of a four-page Bengali paper, *Banglar Katha*, and when efforts to buy *The Servant* floundered (Bose had been a negotiator on Das' behalf), *Forward* was launched, with Bose as manager.

Bose had already begun to debate with those who uncritically accepted Gandhi as saviour (this had reached such ludicrous proportions that during Bose's spell in jail the warders there had told him Gandhi could never be arrested because of his magical powers – among them the ability to take the shape of a bird and fly away). During the Bengal Provincial Conference in April 1923, Bose argued that the Congress must aim for political freedom that would ensure individual liberty and material prosperity: the amorphous Gandhian ideal of Swaraj was not adequate. A month later, at the Bombay A.I.C.C., he argued the case for contesting the council elections. This meeting also saw the first of many tortuous steps towards the eventual compromise between Das and the Gandhians which allowed Das' party to contest the elections.

They produced a great victory for Das and his men – at least in Bengal. Bose, who had primed the political machine during the

campaign, stood for the Calcutta Corporation elections that took place in March 1924; both Subhas and Sarat were elected and the Swarajists won two-thirds of the seats. This was Das' chance to prove to the Raj, and to Gandhi, that he could put into effect a constructive programme. Das was elected Mayor, and Subhas Chief Executive Officer. It was a choice that met with wide approval, most significantly from the Muslims, in whose eyes Subhas was already established as their second favourite Hindu politician – second only to Das.

At twenty-seven he was in effective charge of the corporation of the second city in the empire. He had a salary of 1,500 rupees per month, the use of a car and a contract for three years with a three-month notice period. Subhas Bose's love affair with the corporation had begun. Wherever he went, whichever city he visited, he would first go to its municipality and city corporation. Many years later, in exile in Vienna, he would plan a book about the Vienna municipality.

In Calcutta in 1924 the municipality had almost to be constructed. *Khadi* was made the official uniform for its employees, an education department was started, dispensaries were opened and the weekly *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* was launched.

Soon stories about Bose began to circulate. When Coates, the Chief Engineer, first met Subhas, Coates sauntered in calmly smoking a cigarette. Bose smiled and gently enquired, 'Is it proper, Mr Coates, to smoke before a superior officer?' Coates mumbled his apology and crushed his cigarette in the ashtray. He was soon a reformed man and never smoked again without permission. Such, possibly apocryphal, stories all added to the growing legend of the young man who was an organisational genius and an administrative miracle. He was now the constructive arm of the Swaraj Party. Visitors returned and recounted with awe how they had seen him hard at work till ten or eleven at night.

But, in a narrow, congested lane a mile from where Bose toiled and just a few minutes' walk from 38/2 Elgin Road, a group of people were themselves also busy with plans for him. At 14 Elysium Row (now Lord Sinha Road) was the headquarters of the Special Branch, or political police. Bose was well aware they had been watching him for a long time, but he may not have known that almost every day an agent had reported on his activities and that the

dossier was now complete. It only required action from Writers' Building, the home of the Bengal government. The agents' hard work and Writers' Building's worries were centred on the alternative arm of Indian nationalism, the revolutionaries, and on Bose's relationship with them.

There was one other effect of his becoming Chief Executive Officer. When Subhas was about to accept the post, Hementa wrote advising him to turn it down. It would, he said, be a betrayal of their youthful idealism, a turning-away from the work necessary for raising political consciousness. Subhas disagreed and the two friends parted. Hementa went back to his village, Nalin, turned increasingly towards a home-spun socialism and vanishes from our story.

4

THE MAN

With Subhas settling into his first and only job, this is a good moment to dispose of the idea that he wanted at heart to be a mystic and was only reluctantly an activist. A whole generation of Indians has grown up believing this exaggerated picture.

It is true that he was a man of intellect who had read many philosophers – being personally drawn to Hegel and Bergson, and attracted by Marx's intellectual rigour though not his stress on atheism and complete rejection of the spiritual. Writing in 1940, he saw philosophy as a missed vocation, unexplored because of his hectic political career. But – although certain reclusive traits, such as secretiveness and ability to withdraw, were in him from the beginning – he was essentially a vibrant person who used words to further action and whose philosophy was an aid to his politics, never a substitute for them. Throughout his endless debates with Dilip he never failed to resist his friends' calls to renounce the world and take to the guru and the *ashram*.

His present life-style, too, was far removed from these. His political involvements had already revealed the inadequacy of 38/2 Elgin Road, and a new house acquired by Sarat would from now on become his second home. A large house is almost mandatory for an Indian politician, and at times even the two houses seemed far too cramped. There were guests turning up from all over the country who had to be housed, fed and entertained. An endless stream of political workers dropped in at all hours of the day.

Over the years Subhas' life would become more hurried, but its basic contours would not change. He generally got up late after a night of work and reading; then, after a leisurely breakfast – perhaps the only leisurely meal of the day – he would plunge himself into his

'ceaseless' day. Lunch, dinner and brief moments of rest would be improvised and often taken at all sorts of places and in all sorts of company.

His tall, well-built figure always inclined towards plumpness (he normally weighed about 182 pounds) and his pleasant, rotund, Mongolian features added the element of sexuality necessary to make him a very eligible bachelor. Marriage offers poured in; but though Subhas never formally renounced marriage, he never settled down either. Finance may have been the reason. For most of his life he was dependent on Sarat. Living in a joint family, too, created constraints for as long as he lived in India.

But, if he could not marry, he could always attend wedding feasts, and Subhas' presence at a Bengali wedding became a must. He would refuse nobody, though this often produced absurd results. Once he had promised to be present at a wedding on a day when he was due to attend a political meeting at Howrah, near Calcutta. By the time Subhas and his friends returned it was the small hours of the morning. Satya Bakshi was keen to go home and get some sleep, but Subhas insisted they keep his promise, and at two a.m. they arrived at the bride's place. The sleepy family were woken up and, after Subhas had made his apologies, he demanded the bridal feast. Nothing was left of it, or very little, but the surprised family managed to conjure up some sweets and tea.

Tea was his constant drink. During a really hectic working day Subhas would probably drink about twenty cups, and many years later he told Hari Vishnu Kamath that without tea there could be no politics. He never drank a great deal of hard liquor, and was not choosy about food – he certainly never developed the fastidious habits that drove Gandhi into more and more exotic culinary experiments. But, as we have seen, he loved cooking and eating. On one trip to East Bengal Subhas and his companions were faced with a particular problem: each of the Bengal political homes was eager to entertain him, and insisted that he have at least one meal. This was clearly impossible, and Bose devised a neat compromise. All the housewives should prepare a favourite dish, and he would sample them all. On the great feast day Subhas slowly and methodically provided fresh proof of his love for food.

Subhas, it is true, never developed a light, self-deprecatory sense of humour. Often, in the stress of political events, jokes did tend to

pass by him unmolested. During his ninety-three-day submarine trip from Germany to Japan in 1943, Bose, sketching out his plans for the liberation of India, even began to discuss how he would assign diplomatic posts. At some stage during this fantasy, he turned to his companion Hasan and asked him what job he would like in a free India. Hasan, who has a delightful sense of impish fun, kept a straight face and said, 'Could you kindly send me out as Minister to Honduras?'

Bose, genuinely puzzled, enquired: 'Why?'

Hasan replied, 'Well, sir, there will be such a scramble for jobs when you reach India that I don't wish to be in the running except for something few others might ask for.' Bose was not amused.

Once during his wartime stay in Germany Bose, suffering from a headache, turned to a companion and asked him to tell him a joke. He told him the one about a man who goes out wearing one yellow and one green shoe. When somebody points this out to him he replies, 'I have another pair just like this at home.' Bose heard the joke in silence, then asked, 'Is this the new fashion in Germany?' But then his sense of fun was very Bengali and Indian. He could laugh uproariously, but he often flushed, reminding Dilip of a schoolgirl caught making love. And he could be surprisingly gentle in personal relationships. Political associates and even enemies recall the warmth of his friendship and contrast it with the intellectual austerity that Nehru carried into personal relationships. V.B. Karnik recalls 'personally he was much more likeable than Nehru. He was warmhearted. He would try and establish contact with you'.

To a whole generation of Bose children, sons and daughters of his brothers and sisters, he was special: 'Rangakaka Babu' – literally 'Colourful Uncle', but the term is more often used to denote a favourite younger brother of one's father. He would play hide-and-seek with the children, running down the Elgin Road stairs and searching furiously in the various nooks and corners of the vast house to locate yet another hidden nephew or niece. He would lead them in instructional, devotional hymns, and be their guide in the fulsome patriotic songs that were one of Bengal's contributions to the nationalist movement. In illness, too, he was there to nurse them. Subhas genuinely loved nursing, and although he never trained as a nurse he acquired sufficient experience to act as one.

Something of his childhood reserve always clung to him, however, and for all his revolutionary zeal the code of the gentleman remained part of his character. In 1939, in the middle of his epic fight with Gandhi, he wrote: 'You have remarked in one letter that you hope that whatever happens, "our private relations will not suffer." I cherish this hope with all my heart. If there is anything in life on which I can pride myself, it is that I am a son of a gentleman and as such I am a gentleman.'

This, together with Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda's views on sex, also determined his relationship with women.

This is best seen in the bond that developed between Bose and Basanti Das. It had been instinctive, and within weeks of his becoming Das' lieutenant it was firmly established. In time the two would become so close that Subhas would wish she had been his mother, and Basanti Devi, looking back, would lovingly remember Prabhavati's words, 'I gave birth to Subhas but you are his real mother.' Her house became a home from home and Subhas would spend some of his happiest moments there. Basanti Devi would be subject to his every *abdar*. 'Capricious demand' is an inadequate translation of this rich Bengali word, which conveys a whole Indian world of relationships between favourite child and loving guardian, in which no wish of the child is too burdensome for the guardian (though the wish is almost invariably domestic). The relationship has, in fact, formed the basis for a succession of highly emotional Indian films. Subhas is in and out of the Das household – often late at night, tired and hungry. He wants food. Patient, loving Basanti explains that dinner is long over, there is no cooked food, and that the servants have retired for the night. Well then, Subhas demands, cook me something. Basanti, cursing gently, does so. . . . Yet another late night. It is raining. Subhas arrives, tired, hungry and shadowed by the ubiquitous Bengali police detective. Basanti suggests he go home: Subhas' mother must be getting anxious, and 'pity the poor detective he is getting drenched in the rain.' Subhas is unmoved, 'Let the bastard suffer – who asked him to spy on me?' But Basanti pleads: think of the man's wife and children, he is only doing his duty. And Subhas, his eyes filling with tears, reluctantly leaves. Apocryphal they may be, sentimental they undoubtedly are – but these stories, and many others like them, convey the essential feel of this very Bengali, very *bhadralok* relationship.

5

ENTER REVOLUTIONARIES

A full history of the Indian revolutionary movement is outside the scope of this book. Yet some survey must be made, for its story is relevant to Bose's.

Bengal at the end of the nineteenth century saw the first attempts (the 1857 revolt and subsequent armed uprisings notwithstanding) to organise revolution properly. The nature of the Raj and the overwhelming superiority of the British dictated that these should take the form of small secret societies – and not all of them were revolutionary, or at first even overtly hostile to the Raj. Their stress was on drill, exercises with the *lathi* (a type of stick), perhaps sword-play, a high moral tone (no sex please, we're Hindus) and generous readings about the activities of revolutionaries abroad. Later, as muscular Hinduism took hold, the ideology shaped itself: the *Gita*, in which the Lord Krishna had preached the Hindu philosophy of life to Arjuna, was a constant source of reference; the motherland conveniently became the mother goddess Durga, and the goddess Kali the symbol of strength. All this, laced with a sort of socialism, produced a strong, if confused, driving force. Its limitations were that the stress on Hindu myths alienated the Muslims, though some of them did join in during the early stages, and that it was never a mass movement. But the few thousands it attracted were devoted, dedicated and, as the Raj later admitted, the most sincere of political workers. In Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab it

experienced a remarkable influence, though it was always in Bengal that it was most potent.

The government, in its various reports and detailed studies of the movement, referred to two major revolutionary groups: Anushilan and Jugantar. In fact, there were many more: small secret organisations often bitterly divided by personal feuds but all by now sharing a belief in armed revolution and a free India. Anushilan was probably the best organised of them all. There is still some doubt about when it was started; none about its effectiveness. It was tightly knit and had one leader. It laid down precise rules for recruitment, elaborate duties for its members and various vows at different stages of training. Anushilan revolutionaries went forward to do battle reciting the *Gita* and shouting 'Bande Mataram!' ('Hail to the Mother!'). Jugantar, on the other hand, remained, even at its height, a loose federation. Anushilan and Jugantar, except briefly, never managed to combine. The roots of their quarrel have long been forgotten and were probably based on the personal idiosyncrasies of their leaders; but, except for brief periods during 1914–7 and 1925–8, the two groups opposed each other with almost as much energy as they opposed the British.

The peak of revolutionary violence occurred between 1910 and 1915. The Raj used all its awesome machinery to crush it, and it was only in December 1919 that it felt secure enough to proclaim a royal amnesty. The revolutionary survivors who slowly emerged into the sunlight found a very different world: the reign of Gandhi.

In Bengal Das, quickly realising their potential, attempted to bring together those prepared to renounce violence, or at least not carry out open acts against the Congress.

But, according to a secret government report of March 1924, the police had learnt that:

> Swarajya (another name for the Swaraj Party) . . . had agreed to co-operate with revolutionists as soon as the latter abstained from overt acts and that as soon as revolutionary methods were adopted the Swarajya Party would stand aside and would not interfere.

Das, in the Bengal government's view, was a weak, opportunistic man forever seeking alliances to prop up his power; the revo-

lutionaries were using the new Gandhi-led movement to further their own violent ends, and in time some of Das' men were converted to the revolutionary cause. Bose, of course, was now easily recognised as Das' principal lieutenant. His past, his flamboyant resignation from the ICS, his refusal to condemn violence *per se* all pointed to one government conclusion: that he must be in league with the revolutionaries. From there it was a short step to seeing him as a revolutionary – a step made effortless by the diligent, anonymous work of the numerous moles deep in the nationalist movement. Every day they reported on what Bose, Das and the revolutionaries were up to.

The early months of 1923 had witnessed a revival of violence in Bengal, which included some murders. On 23 August 1923, Birley, Chief Secretary to the government of Bengal, addressed a long letter to the government of India. It contained a detailed note on the revolutionaries, their friends and influences, and asked for power to arrest without a warrant, power to intern, and all the powers of the Defence of India Act and the notorious Rowlatt Acts. Unless something was done quickly, wrote Birley, 'the powerlessness of government to cope with the movement would be apparent to everyone and most of all to the conspirators themselves.' Subhas Bose figured briefly in this massive memorandum. The police had intercepted a letter written by Roy, an old Jugantar hand now in Moscow, to him inviting Bose and Chiranjan, son of C.R. Das, to be delegates from India to the Comintern Conference (it is not clear whether Bose actually received the letter).

The government of India sympathised with Bengal but politely declined to approve naked repression. Not that Simla (the Raj had moved to its summer retreat) was any more liberal than Writers' Building. It was just that repression on this scale would be out of place at a time when the government was keen to 'touch the heart of India'. As a concession it unleashed the hoary and tested Regulation III of 1818, first used against recalcitrant *nawabs* and princes. It was this that abruptly removed many Swarajists, including the designated assistant editor of *Forward*, for whom Bose was ordered to deputise.

On 12 January 1924 Gopinath Saha, a young revolutionary, shot a man he was convinced was Charles Tegart, Police Commissioner of Calcutta. He was mistaken; it turned out to be Ernest Day, an

innocent British businessman. Saha was promptly arrested, tried and sentenced to death. When he heard the judge pronounce the death sentence he declared: 'May every drop of blood of mine sow the seed of liberty in every Indian home.' The Bengal Provincial Congress Conference in May 1924 passed a resolution in Bengali whose original translation was given as:

> While adhering to the policy of non-violence this Conference pays its respectful homage to the patriotism of Gopinath Saha who suffered capital punishment in connection with Mr Day's murder.

Gandhi was appalled. He replied that, if Gopinath Saha's patriotism was to be mentioned, it should be qualified by the phrase 'misleading'. Das replied that the translation from Bengali was incorrect and that the qualifying word had, in fact, been used. After the session the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee met and confirmed Das' translation. This read (complete with brackets):

> This Conference, while denouncing (or 'dissociating itself from') violence (every kind of *himsa*)* and adhering to the principle of non-violence, appreciates Gopinath Saha's ideal of self-sacrifice, misguided though that is in respect of the best interests of the country, and expresses its respect for his self-sacrifice.

Government agents, desperately keen to prove that Das had modified his stand in response to Gandhi, spent hours agonising over the translation. They became convinced that, intricate grammatical arguments aside, Subhas Bose had tried and failed to remove the epithet 'misleading' from the resolution when it was re-adopted by the committee.

The indictment against him was slowly, steadily getting stronger. A further letter from Bengal to the Indian government declared:

> It has been shown that Subhas Bose is a leader of the Jugantar Party [reading government documents it is not exactly clear

**Himsa* means violence.

> when this was shown], and since he is the Chief Lieutenant of Mr C.R. Das, it is impossible to believe that Mr Das is not fully aware of his activities. . . . There was considerable competition for the post of Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation, and the support given to Subhas by his revolutionary followers helped to weigh down the scales in his favour. He promised to employ a number of revolutionists in the Corporation, and there is excellent reason to believe that he has not overlooked the importance of the control of the Corporation by the revolutionists, in the event of an armed rising.

Having made Bose leader, the government saw him everywhere.

> Information obtained from an exceedingly reliable source showed that Satyen Mitra . . . in conjunction with . . . Subhas Bose, was planning a spectacular outrage, viz., the throwing of a bomb in the Council Chamber. In pursuance of this plot they succeeded in obtaining an official plan of the building and in introducing fellow revolutionists into the visitors' gallery of the Council House to arrange details.

Soon the agents were able to provide the clinching argument: Bose himself was directing the conspiracy to kill Tegart. Bengal spent much of 1924 in detailed correspondence with Delhi, pleading for special powers and drafting a bill that provided for draconian measures. Realising that the Swarajist-dominated Council of Bengal would never pass such measures, it asked the Viceroy to issue an ordinance. Though the Home Secretary of the Government of India, Crerar, was impressed, his superior, the Home Member Alexander Muddiman, felt that the idea of the Mayor of Calcutta wanting to kill the Commissioner of Police 'suggests Ruritanian opera'. (In the Raj set-up a Secretary was the permanent ICS official who reported to a Member of the Executive Council that advised the Viceroy, or in the case of the provinces, the Governor. The Executive Council was a sort of Cabinet, though in fact the Viceroy was more of an absolute monarch, answerable only to the Secretary of State for India.)

When the Viceroy's Executive Council continued to baulk at the measures, Lord Lytton travelled to Simla personally to plead for

them, arguing that unless something was done the future would be grim, and might even require the imposition of martial law. On 23 August, Bengal applied by cipher telegram for warrants for the arrest of Bose and twenty-one other leaders, under Regulation III of 1818, backing the requests up with all kinds of miscellaneous intelligence information.

Now C.R. Das, eager to get results, quite unwittingly played into the Bengal government's hands. In an interview with the *Statesman* on the night of 30 August 1924 he said that the anarchist movement was much more serious than the government thought, and if 'the Swarajist movement fails . . . anarchy is sure to raise its head'. Tegart immediately summoned a representative of the *Statesman* and, after 'incessant heckling', wheedled out of him that, in an off-the-record chat, Das had gone even further: he knew that a consignment of 200 small arms had arrived.

This prompted a flurry of telegrams from Bengal, and at last the government of India relented. The Labour Secretary of State for India had been kept fully informed – now all that was required was his formal consent, and that was quickly obtained. On 25 October 1924 the ordinance was promulgated.

The government story was a strange mixture of hearsay evidence and conjecture; but, if even some of the details were true, it was and is devastating. We have, unfortunately, no means of checking. The government in Delhi and Simla was never told precisely who Bengal's agents were or how they obtained their information. These details were kept at the Bengal government's Special Branch, and secrecy in the West Bengal archives – even those at Writers' Building – is an absolute craze. As for Elysium Row itself, no scholar has ever been allowed to examine its records.

Many of the old revolutionaries survive, but their memories are confusing and occasionally very obdurate. Some still nurture the illusion that they are fighting the British, and refuse to discuss their past. Others drop tantalising hints which lead nowhere, while some believe that the whole enquiry is futile. When I approached Satya Ranjan Bakshi, Bose's closest lieutenant, in June 1978, he said, 'But Netaji is going to be in the field in two months. That will change everything.'

In 1964 Bakshi, probably less sure that 'Netaji' would return, told Leonard Gordon, an American scholar, that Bose knew what was

going on at the time in question but was not actively involved. Surendra Mohan Ghosh, who was close to Das and a Jugantar leader, confirmed this view.

Bose did not believe in Gandhian non-violence. To him it was no more than a technique useful in certain circumstances; violence could also have its uses. Faced early on with Dilip's revulsion at terrorism, he told him: 'I admit it is regrettable, even ugly if you will, though it also has a terrible beauty of its own. But maybe that beauty does not unveil her face except to her devotees. But what would you have?' The question is, however, whether Bose in 1924 decided the time was right for violence. He stoutly denied that he was involved. And indeed, the idea of Bose the revolutionary planning to bomb the council, smuggle arms, kill Tegart is absurd – one of the many stupidities that characterised Raj thinking. He was just making his political mark, proving his organisational worth; he had much to lose by going to prison. He had possibly heard of the revolutionaries, and had certainly helped them on a personal basis. In the corporation people who had suffered in the national cause were given preference in employment, and that meant jobs for a lot of revolutionaries and ex-revolutionaries. But it is doubtful if Bose did anything more than that.

Also, the government had strong reasons for acting as they did – not only to crush the revolutionaries but also to deal with the Swarajists. The latter had the government by the throat, as the Bengal Secretary's crucial letter of 1 September to the government of India acknowledged.

> The Swarajists have now practically achieved their object as far as the Bengal Legislative Council is concerned . . . at present government can command no support for any of their actions.

Even as the proclamation was being issued police were on their way to 38/2 Elgin Road. In the small hours of Saturday 25 October Subhas was woken up and told by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, 'Mr Bose, I have a very unpleasant duty to perform. I have a warrant for your arrest under Regulation III of 1818.' His house was thoroughly searched, some papers and correspondence were seized and he was bundled off again to Alipore Central Jail, that vast collection of barracks between the Calcutta Zoo and the race-

course. This time was to be very different from his first prison spell with Das.

Bose was never presented with the charges in writing, though several times during his period in jail police officers visited him and read out a list of them. Bose, shocked and somewhat bemused, replied that he was wholly innocent and demanded to be tried in a court of law. When the *Catholic Herald* alleged that Subhas' father was glad his son's Corporation work kept him away from revolutionary activities, and *The Englishman* and *The Statesman* repeated the allegation, Subhas immediately instructed Sarat to file libel suits against the papers. The cases dragged on for a long time. Eventually Justice Gregory of the High Court found the *Catholic Herald* guilty of 'very serious libel' and awarded 4,000 rupees. Father Gille, the editor, fled the country and the paper ceased publication. Bose obtained 2,000 rupees from *The Englishman* but had a messy draw against *The Statesman*.

No public proof has ever been presented either way. Bose himself was convinced that the allegation was 'the result of personal malice against me on the part of high police officials'. We shall never know for sure.

6

JAIL: GURU LOST

Nobody found Bose's arrest more difficult to accept than Chittaranjan Das. Das had lost the one man he could always rely on. Das summoned Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders to Calcutta, and between 26 and 31 October 1924 five public meetings were held, ending with a mammoth meeting on the 31st where over 150,000 joined Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Das in condemning the 'lawless laws'. In November an all-party conference condemned the laws, and at the annual Congress session, with Gandhi in the chair, a motion 'congratulated the Swarajists and others arrested under the new Ordinance of Regulation III of 1818'.

The history of the independence movement in India is the history of the prison shuttle: a leader would be arrested, perhaps put on trial; then, after he refused to defend himself, he would spend some time in jail in moderate comfort. This would be a time for studying and writing, to be followed by a spell of freedom and then prison again. All the prominent nationalist leaders went through this, though Bose's experiences were somewhat different. He was generally held under laws that did not require trials, his spells in jail were longer than most of the others' and the conditions were sufficiently bad to damage his health. The British were to release Bose three times on health grounds – once so that he could go to Europe to recover.

After a little over a month and a half at Alipore he was transferred to Berhampur in the heart of the Bengal countryside. Then, on 25 January 1925, he was informed that he was no longer a prisoner under Regulation III of 1818 but under the Ordinance of 1925, and

was quickly taken to Calcutta. Here, after a night in a veritable hell-hole, Calcutta's Lalbazar police station, crawling with bugs and mosquitoes and with filthy 'sanitary arrangements', he was bundled into a van and then on to a launch cruising on the river Hooghly. Soon he was put on a ship, and it was only then that he realised that – along with others detained under the 'lawless laws' – he was bound for Mandalay in Burma. Armed guards stood outside their cabins, and a large police escort accompanied them from Rangoon to Mandalay.

Burma, then part of the British administration in India, was convenient as a repository for political prisoners, particularly the more obdurate ones. Bose lived in the same yard where Tilak, a militant nationalist, had lived twenty years before, could gaze on the lemon trees he had planted, and found that life in Mandalay Jail had changed little since those days. The buildings were of wooden palisading and offered no resistance to heat, rain or cold. He had arrived in the middle of the worst season, just three months before the rains, and found Mandalay, as he told Sarat, to be the 'kingdom of dust' everywhere – in food, clothes and furniture; there were even dust storms.

There was little to distract him, and no sooner had he arrived in Mandalay then he was unwell: first he had indigestion, then a weakening dyspepsia-cum-flu. The government had yet to supply him with any books, and they told him he could not even have his favourite paper *The Forward*, which the authorities thought would prevent him from reforming. But prison, it has been said, is a great educator, and Subhas always used his time well. He managed to read widely after all; he wrote innumerable letters and articles, classified his ideas and worked out his future programme. These two and a half years in Burma have been seen as a turning-point in his life. He entered prison as a twenty-eight-year-old activist full of dedication but still with no properly developed political ideas. He would leave as a hardened, sceptical man of thirty-one, brimming with ideas and plans. He felt keenly about what he thought was 'a defect in my education, viz., a colossal ignorance of Bengali literature'. He was constantly petitioning Sarat and Dilip for books: Dostoievsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Turgenev's *Smoke* and a whole lot of Russell: *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization*, *Icarus or the Future of Science*, *Free Thought and Official Propaganda* (though

Dilip hesitated to send him *What I Believe* – the book was fine, but 'his sincere views on morality must needs shock you', wrote Dilip).

Dilip was already established as his philosophical sparring partner, and they exchanged lengthy letters which provide a fascinating insight into Bose's mind as he underwent his first real personal and political test. Since their Cambridge days the two had not had much time together. While Subhas was active in politics, Dilip, affected by Subhas' resignation from the ICS, had abandoned his own desire for it and turned to his first love – music. He would soon draw further away, renouncing the world for Aurobindo's ashram at Pondicherry, and in the years to come would often try to lure Subhas from what Dilip thought was the wasteful world of politics to the infinitely more satisfying one of mysticism, divine glory and utopian wonder.

Subhas also wrote down his thoughts and developing ideas in a book, *Pebbles on the Sea-shore*, in an essay entitled 'The Failure of Buddhism' – and in eight prison notebooks. These covered, as always, a remarkably catholic range. He developed his ideas on the necessity for revolt; on the modernisation of Hinduism; and above all on the role of Bengal. Bengali literature must break away from 'foreign' – English – influence and develop 'an intimate relationship with the heart of the Society'. Above all, Bengal must realise her heritage, her mission.

Once upon a time Bengal too had been great; medieval Gaur had been a centre of learning and scholarship, a meeting-place for the different strands of Hindu and Buddhist thought; culture had flourished; everyone had been happy. But then had come the fall: he did not specify how, though one main reason for it had been the coming of the British. Bengal had betrayed India. Now:

> The people of Bengal must not forget that she occupies a distinctive place not only in India but also in the whole world, that she will have duties to perform peculiar to the position she holds . . . The new India will be created by Bengal's genius through a revival of her literature, science, art and music coupled with a renewed interest in physical culture and social service. The Bengalees alone are capable of bringing about a cultural synthesis and effecting comprehensive development of our national life.

But even as he constructed this powerful cocoon of nationalism and virginal longing in which to rock himself in prison, he learnt that C.R. Das was dead.

Das had fought the Raj almost to a standstill. The budget had been upset and twice the ministers' salaries had been rejected. Lytton had prorogued the council and taken over the administration himself, proving dyarchy to be the farce it was: puppet assemblies assuming grandeur via the pretence of power. But in the process Das had killed himself, and in June 1925 he suddenly died in Darjeeling.

Bose was desolate. For long years he had sought this guru; now, in the middle of their first period of separation, he was gone. Even four years later he would write to Basanti: 'He who was at once my friend, philosopher and guide in my life's mission is no more. Today I am utterly destitute.' He urged Basanti to take her husband's place; and on his release, nearly two years later, pleaded, 'Please give some thought to the duties and tasks awaiting me . . . I do not wish to take up any work now without consulting you.' But Basanti did not seek a public role, and this deepened the pain of Das' death.

There was much of the emotional Bengali in this reaction, but Das' death had also knocked away a most important political prop: the older, more experienced politician who shrewdly smoothes the way for his protégé. It is interesting to see that his great rival Nehru enjoyed the benefits of a guru well into his late middle-age. Nehru's initial political prominence had been due almost entirely to the fact that he was the son of Motilal, a contemporary of Das and Gandhi. Gandhi had quickly realised the worth of Nehru and, through much of the crucial 1920s and 1930s, he promoted him as his successor, getting him elected as Congress president in 1930 and, despite their much-trumpeted philosophical and ideological differences, readily succouring and guiding him. Das' untimely death meant that, at a very crucial time in Bose's political life, there was nobody experienced or weighty enough to guide him through the often factional waters of Indian politics. We cannot say, of course, what would have happened if Das had lived; but it is reasonable to speculate that, in a country where a good guru is always useful, Bose might have found himself less of an outsider than he did.

Bose did not have long to ponder over this loss as he got involved

in the first of his many prison battles. Ever since his imprisonment Bose had chafed at the strict prison regime. Things came to a head in early 1926 over the authorities' refusal to allow money for Bose and his friends to celebrate the festival of Saraswati Puja. Now Bose skilfully welded religious nationalism and the fine print of prison regulations to present an eloquent case against the government. Arguing that the laws under which he had been detained did not permit any 'hardship savouring of punishment', and, in fact, entitled him to treatment 'in keeping with my rank and station in life', Bose wrote several letters to the Chief Secretary of the Burmese government, attacking its 'arbitrary infringement of religious rights'. The letters and petition were marked by characteristically extravagant religious and nationalistic sentiments extolling ancient Indian civilisations and declaring: 'The materialistic organisation of the West of today is sitting like a nightmare on India's bosom.'

At least one Raj civil servant was impressed, and neither the government of Burma nor of India was altogether unsympathetic. But the government of Bengal, whose relations with Bose were always marked by a strange mixture of fear and vindictiveness, would not hear of any concession. Though publicly Bengal pretended it was the Burma government that decided jail regulations, nothing could be done without Bengal's express approval. On 18 February 1926 Subhas led his fellow-prisoners at Mandalay on a hunger strike. On the 22nd they were joined by the inmates of Insein Jail. By the eighth day the strikers were being force-fed and nationalist India was getting increasingly concerned. Finally Maulana Shaukat Ali, a prominent leader of the Congress, arrived at Mandalay to reason with Subhas. His visit looked like proving fruitless until he produced his trump card. Subhas' friends in Bengal wanted him to give up the strike, even Sarat was of that view. Shocked, the strikers decided to call off their action, and this caused a rare period of strain between Subhas and Sarat.

Worse still, it led to a deterioration in Subhas' health. Mandalay had never agreed with it; now, as it grew progressively worse, the government consented to a joint medical examination by the Civil Surgeon, Colonel Kowall, and an older brother of Subhas, Dr Sunil Bose. They examined Subhas on 12 February 1927 and decided he was probably suffering from tuberculosis, which could only be cured by rest and medical attention outside jail. Sunil Bose, even

recommended a 'prolonged stay in a sanatorium in Switzerland'.

This opened up a fascinating debate among the Raj officials on how to deal with him. The debate would recur whenever Bose was imprisoned, and it formed a prelude to any decision to release him. He was too dangerous free, but in jail he might die. The Raj and its officials could never escape from this dilemma.

The Bengal government's initial reaction was to suggest that Bose could perhaps be moved to some other more suitable Indian jail. Almora in the United Provinces or even Abbottabad in the North West Frontier. But as Delhi, which had to shop around for a jail, found, nobody was willing to risk having Bose in custody. Burma, never happy about taking Bose, was now getting increasingly alarmed about Bengal's dilatoriness, as were the top Raj civil servants. Haig, the Home Secretary, thought acceptance of Sunil Bose's proposal would have been a humane answer to the release of Bose, all the more so as this was a problem 'for which Bengal see no solution'. Muddiman felt Bengal were behaving like the Stuarts – weak when they ought to be strong, and vice versa. Eventually the Bengal government came round to the Switzerland idea, but in such a way that it produced one of the few comic episodes of this sorry tale.

During a debate in the Bengal Council the home member of the Bengal Executive Council, Sir A N. Moberley, offered to release Bose provided he proceeded straight to Switzerland from Rangoon and gave his word to exile himself from India. Bengal, in fact, hoped he would refuse and thus absolve them of guilt. All this did was invite the wrath of the Secretary of State for India. For some time now, he had been stalling the House of Commons about Bose's health, and when he read about Moberley's proposals in *The Times*, he furiously cabled Delhi: 'most improper ... to permit notorious anarchist to go to European country which is refuge of anarchists and focus of anarchical conspiracy without permission of His Majesty's Government with whom would rest responsibility of watching him there'. The Bengal government were now hoist with their own petard, having deported Bose as a dangerous revolutionary – though the Viceroy did manage to pacify the Secretary of State by declaring that, though Bose was a national hero in Bengal, he was likely to be less effective outside India than within.

Subhas, in any case, rejected the proposals and was particularly

upset about not being allowed to see his family *en route*. But, with the family anxious about his health, a compromise of sorts appears to have been negotiated between the Bengal government and Sarat. It was agreed that the family would take a house in Almora, and that Subhas would stay there for three months with only the family as company and then proceed to Switzerland. After a great deal of pressure from Sarat, who did not always relay to Subhas what he had agreed with Moberley, Subhas agreed to go to Almora; but Switzerland was still out. Insistence by the Bengal government on their original proposal was cut short by a desperate Burma, who were quite determined to have Bose out of Rangoon before the rains came; and, after much pressure from Delhi, the U.P. Government consented to find jail space for Subhas.

On 7 May Bose was put on a steamer for Almora. Just before the steamer entered Calcutta it was intercepted by the Bengal government, whose doctors examined Bose. They pronounced his condition 'serious', and the government decided to cut its losses. On 16 May 1927 Bose was handed an unconditional release order.

After two years and six months he returned to his bedroom at 38/2 Elgin Road, sick in body but quite clear about his intentions. In the middle of the negotiations with the Bengal government, Subhas had written to a colleague, 'My mind and spirit now yearns for absolute achievement and absolute sacrifice'; two days before leaving Burma he wrote to Sarat, 'I am not a shopkeeper and I do not bargain. The slippery paths of diplomacy I abhor as unsuited to my constitution.' The incredibly more slippery pathways of Indian nationalist politics would soon test this resolve.

7

THE RELUCTANT HEIR

Through the summer of 1927 Bose recuperated at Kesall Lodge in Shillong, a pleasant Assam hill station. He had plenty of time to reflect and look around. What he saw appalled him, for the political world he had come back to was very different from the one he had left. The winning coalition put together by Das had all but disintegrated, and his would-be heirs were busy scrambling for power. The most important of them, Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, had already assumed Das' mantle: the 'triple crown' of the presidentship of the Swaraj Party, the presidentship of the Bengal Congress Party and the mayoralty of Calcutta. To add to the completeness of his joy, Gandhi – in Calcutta to mourn Das – had himself anointed Sengupta as Das' successor. After Gandhi had done this king-making job a rather peeved Sarat was said to have asked him, 'What have you left for Subhas?' Gandhi smiled his toothless smile and replied, 'For Subhas there is the whole of India.' Sarat was not amused.

Sengupta, in fact, represented only one of the many factions that composed Das' coalition. There were also the revolutionaries of the Karmisangha (Workers' Society); there were provincials trying to break into the Calcutta-controlled Congress world. Sarat had also formed his his own caucus, which was soon dubbed 'the Big Five': Sarat himself, Nirmal Chunder Chunder, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, Bidhan Chandra Roy and Tulsi Charan Goswami. Though the latter were not as formally organised as the Karmisangha, they were united by identical interests and similar backgrounds – they all came from the Bengali high-caste élite. All these groups were struggling

with the impossible inheritance left by Das: here a concession to a regional interest, there an alliance with important caste groups, and towards the end of his life an attempt to solve the Hindu–Muslim problem at the élite level. Sengupta, the Big Five and the revolutionaries did not by themselves have the skill to hold all this together. News of their factional in-fighting had reached Bose in Mandalay and terribly depressed him. Sometime in 1926 he wrote to a friend: 'Is there no such worker in Bengal today who can offer silent self-immolation in disregard of the quarrels of the power-hungry politicians?'

In late October 1927, five months after he had been released, he descended from Shillong to the now cool plains of Calcutta, and – certified medically fit by his doctors – decided to resume politics. Almost immediately he was elected President of the Bengal Congress Committee, and for the moment peace reigned among the factions. His first task was to deal with the terrible communal problems. Throughout 1926 and 1927 Hindus and Muslims had clashed in ugly riots all over the country. It was always the same story – Muslims killing cows, Hindus playing music in front of mosques. The Bengal Pact that Das had worked for was now in shreds.

When Bengal had been re-united in 1911, undoing the 1905 Curzon partition, Muslims formed a small majority in the province. They were wretchedly poor, largely illiterate and terribly oppressed – particularly in East Bengal – by cruel, absentee Hindu landlords. This situation contained the seeds of a great explosion, and Das tried in his proper, establishment way to combat it. He got the Bengal Swaraj Party to agree that, when the Congress came to power, 60% of all new jobs would be reserved for Muslims, and in Calcutta Corporation as much as 80%; but the party only accepted this after a relentless struggle. The upper-caste muscular Hindus who dominated the revolutionaries were not convinced of the need for such a pact. Das was even less successful outside Bengal: the annual Congress session in 1923 rejected the idea.

For the Raj the pact was a disaster. Its whole policy – even existence – was based on the theory, assiduously cultivated, that Hindu was Hindu and Muslim was Muslim and never the twain should meet. Any attempt to get them together, on however fragile a basis was 'unnatural'; and it tried hard to undo the pact. But the

official announcement of the Bengal Pact had been made under Bose's signature as secretary of the Congress, and he was determined to preserve communal amity. In May and June 1927 terrible Hindu–Muslim riots had racked Calcutta and in November the leaders were sufficiently concerned to call for a unity conference. Bose took up the theme at a large gathering at Calcutta's Shraddhananda Park:

> There may be Hindus who in a corner of their hearts felt elated at the shooting of unarmed Muslims at Kulkati. If that be so it is a pity and a shame. I beg of you to remember that those who can shoot down unarmed Muslims today can shoot down unarmed Hindus tomorrow.

How could freedom, he asked, be achieved if Hindus could not live together with Muslims?

This was one of few occasions when Bose made a long public statement on the Hindu–Muslim problem. Like all Indian nationalists, he saw communalism almost wholly as a British creation. In *The Indian Struggle*, written seven years after this speech, he hardly dealt with a problem that was already of major importance and would soon become maddeningly complex and bitter. He had simplified the issue, for the Raj's help and encouragement for separatist Muslim feeling was only one of several factors that ultimately divided the sub-continent between India and Pakistan. The Hindu upper classes and castes had carefully nurtured remembrance of the manner in which the invading Muslims had deprived them of their power, robbed them of their wealth and humiliated their women. They feared the crusading spirit of Islam, dreaded the allegedly greater sexual potency of the Muslims (a dread that remains to this day) and had only caste and their tremendously confused and decayed system of values and duties to offer against an Islam that offered a system characterised by simplicity and apparently – at least for the male – by equality. Though Islam had come to India with the sword, most Muslim converts were from the wretchedly oppressed lower Hindu castes; at one stroke they could feel that they were becoming human beings.

This helped their self-esteem but did little to improve their economic plight. While the Muslim upper classes lived well, and their

life-style was soon copied by their Hindu counterparts eager to serve their new masters, the poor Hindus became the poorer Muslims and remained at the mercy of the more rapacious Hindu castes. Led by men eager to obscure uncomfortable economic facts by religious fanaticism, both communities were to slide slowly and steadily into communalism and a cycle of hatred.

Subhas Bose never had the time, or perhaps the inclination, to examine the deeper problems. He always sought and worked for Hindu–Muslim unity on the basis of respect for each other's religious rights – and he very nearly succeeded in the Calcutta Corporation in 1940 and more spectacularly in the Indian National Army during the war. Years later M.A.H. Ispahani, a Calcutta Muslim League businessman who can barely conceal his hate for the Congress, would recall the warmth of Subhas' friendship and his efforts to promote unity: 'Had Bose remained in India, he may well have boldly struck out for Muslim friendship.'

The Hindu–Muslim problem was, however, overshadowed by the wider political one: nationalist India had exhausted itself and the Congress was in a deep morass. Gandhi was still in one of his many periodic retirements and the Swaraj Party was in desperate trouble. Dyarchy, that much-trumpeted Raj experiment for educating Indians in parliamentary government, was dead – in fact it was, as Maurice Collins, a Chief Secretary of Burma, noted, a term of abuse. (He overheard one assistant township officer saying to another, 'You are a dyarchy.') But in killing it the Swaraj Party had very nearly killed itself. Their tactics worked brilliantly in the short term but were impossible as a viable long-term strategy. As Gandhi had feared, many of their members were finding obstruction in council wearing and corrupting, and by mid-1926 the Swaraj Party of Das had split almost irretrievably into those who stayed in the assemblies and called themselves the Responsivist Party, and those following Motilal, who decided to walk out.

It was the Raj which provided the nationalists with unexpected assistance. The reforms of 1919 required that a review of the Indian political scene be made every ten years. The first was not due till 1929, but with the Conservatives uncertain of retaining power and Labour already a credible alternative, it was decided to send a commission early. On 8 November 1927 a seven-man team was announced; in an incredible act of racial arrogance the British

government had decided that all seven would be whites. Moreover, Sir John Simon, the chairman, was a disaster – a dry, humourless man who found it difficult to relate to people. It was just the kick that political India needed, and every shade of nationalist opinion opposed Simon and his men. Even the Liberals, always keen to get on the right side of the Raj, saw the commission as 'a deliberate insult to the people of India'. For Bose, the situation revealed a wider truth:

> Our society affords numerous examples where a parent treats a forty-year-old son as a baby. No wonder it needs a Simon Commission to come from across the seas to shape the destinies of such a people.

On 3 February 1928 John Simon and his friends arrived in India. The Congress had called for *hartal* on that day: strikes, demonstrations and effective closure of all shops and establishments. Bose had wanted a wider, deeper strategy, paralleling the one followed during the Prince of Wales' visit seven years before. He was convinced that such a movement had tremendous possibilities, and in Calcutta he set out to prove it. That day Bengal witnessed massive demonstrations, boycott of British goods and, inevitably, clashes with the police. By the time the commission returned for their second and more comprehensive visit in October 1928, political India was in turmoil. The lethargy and inertia of the earlier years had vanished.

But Gandhi was not impressed. He acknowledged the fervour aroused by Bose in Calcutta, but he still preferred to wait for the mysterious 'light' to guide him into action. He was aware of the very different feelings being voiced by Bose and Nehru; in the Congress sessions of 1927 they had got a resolution for complete independence through although it was not yet an established Congress policy. But the Mahatma was determined to prevent them from running away with things. Bose, of course, was convinced that an active soldier, as Gandhi described himself, grabbed the light and did not wait for it to emerge. This was the first of the significant differences between the two men which came to dominate Indian politics in the next few years.

8

THE MANY-FRONTED WAR

On Christmas Day 1928, two days before the Congress met for its annual session in Calcutta, Bose welcomed the delegates to the third All-India Youth Congress. He was, he said, a pragmatist, and it was in this role that he wanted to analyse the effects of the two philosophies ruling in India at that moment – the school of Sabarmati, where Gandhi lived and preached, and the Pondicherry school of Aurobindo.

> The actual effect of the propaganda carried on by the Sabarmati school is to create a feeling and impression that modernism is bad, large scale production is evil, wants should not be increased and the standard of living should not be raised, that we must endeavour to the best of our ability to go back to the days of the bullock cart and that the soul is so important that physical culture and military training could well be ignored. The actual effect of the propaganda carried on by the Pondicherry school of thought is to create a feeling and an impression that there is nothing higher or nobler than peaceful contemplation. . . . It is the passivism, not philosophic but actual, inculcated by these schools of thought against which I protest. . . In India we want today a philosophy of activism. We must be inspired by robust optimism. We have to live in the present and to adapt ourselves to modern conditions. We can no longer live in an isolated corner of the world.

> When India is free, she will have to fight her modern enemies with modern methods, both in the economic and in the political spheres. The days of the bullock cart are gone and gone forever. Free India must arm herself for any eventuality as long as the whole world does not accept wholeheartedly the policy of disarmament.

Verbal attacks on Gandhi were not uncommon. For the great majority of British officials he was subversive (the shrewder ones saw him as a useful bulwark against a greater, more violently efficient movement), and many Indian collaborators feared his influence. But, M. N. Roy and the communists apart, nobody had so far attacked him from within the Congress. (Nehru's calls for socialism avoided any direct attacks on Gandhi, and when he occasionally erred he always apologised promptly.) Bose was the first openly to challenge him. He had moved a long way from muscular Hinduism, and would now steadily articulate the radical, activist alternative to Gandhi – long before it had become fashionable or even prudent.

Two days after Bose had roused the young, Gandhi responded by clamping down the older, more seasoned Congressmen at the annual session. The debate was on what had come to be known as the Nehru Report. Answering Birkenhead's taunt that Indians were incapable of producing their own constitution, Indian political leaders had during 1928 made strenuous efforts to prove him wrong. In February and March an all-party convention had been held at Delhi, bringing together – momentarily – nearly every shade of political opinion, and throughout the summer Bose had worked with Motilal Nehru, Sapru and others in framing the report.

The final version provided for common electorates for all communities, retained the basically unitary form of government that prevailed, and – most controversially – defined the goal of the Congress as dominion status. Bose had strenuously opposed this back-sliding from the Madras Congress resolution favouring complete independence. In deference to his arguments – and the feelings of the younger radicals – the statement of aims was qualified so that it would be adopted 'without restricting the liberty of action of those political parties whose goal was complete independence'. But when the report was presented to another session of the all-party

convention at Lucknow in August 1928 Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru and the others seriously thought of opposing it. Finally they decided to record their feelings but not actually vote against the report. To emphasise their disagreement further, they decided to set up an Independence for India League – which, it appears, did little, largely because, though Jawaharlal spoke eloquently, he could never galvanise it into action.

At the Calcutta Congress Motilal Nehru, fearing his report would be rejected, appealed to Gandhi. On Boxing Day 1928 Gandhi moved a resolution in the Subjects Committee to adopt the Nehru Report, with a warning to the British that if they did not respond by 31 December 1930 Congress would re-start non-co-operation, refuse to pay taxes and non-violently hinder the government. Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru argued strongly against him, and two days later Gandhi brought the deadline forward by a year. But even this was inadequate. Harping on dominion status, Bose was convinced, would be disastrous for the Congress, the national mood, international opinion and the younger, increasingly radical nationalists. What was worse, the resolution again contained no programme, no plan of action – it was more of the search for the undefined Gandhi light. However, Gandhi had the numbers, and the Subjects Committee passed the resolution by 118 votes to 45. He also got Bose and Nehru to agree to support the motion in the open session.

But Bose was under intense pressure from his supporters to reverse this decision. Through the night preceding the open session they gathered support, moving from one camp of delegates to another. Finally they confronted Bose. When he still appeared reluctant to go back on his agreement with Gandhi, one of the delegates, in an emotional appeal, warned him of the consequences. Bengal's leader must speak for Bengal. Did he not realise the fervour for independence? If he failed Bengal now he would lose her. Bose relented, and in the open session moved an amendment to Gandhi's resolution.

> Can you lay your hands on your breasts and say that there is a reasonable chance of getting dominion status within the period [of a year]?

As the delegates cried out, he continued:

> You can say, what do we gain by this resolution of independence? I say we develop a new mentality. . . . If you want to overcome the slave mentality you will do so by encouraging our countrymen to stand for complete independence.

But, though there was prolonged applause after the speech, Gandhi had the delegates firmly in control. His most potent weapon, as always, was personal. His supporters had asked him when he would return to politics, and in the Subjects Committee a few days earlier he had warned that if he did not get his way he would once again retire. The threat was an old Gandhi tactic: if you are not with me, you are against me.

The Congress knew that without Gandhi there could be no movement against the British. Bose's amendment was lost by 973 votes to 1,350, with 48 abstentions. The arid green Park Circus *maidan* in Calcutta's teeming Muslim ghetto resounded with cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai*!' – 'Long live the great-souled one!' – and Gandhi was suitably scathing about Bose's *volte-face*.

But a different, wider-ranging expression of Bose's militancy had already found expression at the Park Circus *maidan*. Traditionally, at Congress sessions volunteers were organised to provide a guard of honour during the ceremonial functions, keep order during the session and act like an unofficial, very non-violent and not always very organised army. This time there was some dispute as to who would organise the volunteers. The East Bengal Jugantar group had a candidate, the Anushilan wanted their leader and the Calcutta-based Jugantar wanted their man. Eventually it was decided to get Bose to do the job. Characteristically, he gave the operation a thoroughly military look. 2,000 volunteers were organised; all of them received a certain amount of military training and half of them wore uniforms, with specially designed steel-chain epaulettes for the officers. Nirad Chaudhuri, who knew Subhas well and worked for Sarat later, was in Calcutta at that time and continues the story:

> Bose designated himself as its General-Officer-Commanding, G.O.C. for short, and his uniform was made by a firm of British tailors in Calcutta, Harman's. A telegram addressed to him as

> G.O.C. was delivered to the British General in Fort William and this was the subject of a good deal of malicious comment in the Anglo-Indian Press. Mahatma Gandhi, being a sincere pacifist, vowed to non-violence, did not like the strutting, clicking of boots and saluting, and he afterwards described the Calcutta session of the Congress as a Bertram Mills circus, which caused great indignation among the Bengalis.

Some of the Bengalis were amused, too. As Bose discussed arrangements for the session and allocated jobs to the officers, Kiran Shankar Roy piped up with: 'If we're all getting titles, can I be an admiral? After all, I come from East Bengal.' The idea of an East Bengal navy, lost in the region's myriad waterways, was an old Bengali joke. For Bose, however, the volunteers were a very serious expression of a certain side of his personality and a contemporary photograph captures this well. Bose is standing next to Motilal Nehru, who, as president, is taking the salute at the march-past. In his Harman-tailored uniform Bose looks like a thick-set, well-built Japanese general, stern and forbidding – though with a surprisingly mellow face. Next to him Motilal Nehru, in his crumpled *shirwani* and *kurta*, looks bewildered and distinctly uncomfortable.

The volunteers were investigated by the intelligence department, at the Viceroy's request; for once the Raj failed to penetrate their revolutionary origins, but in fact the Congress marked the birth of one of the most successful of the revolutionary groups in Bengal during the 1930s.

Bose was convinced that the key to a new India was the growing consciousness among the young – those coming out from the schools and colleges full of worthy liberal ideas, only to find that the realities of the Raj were painfully different. Throughout 1928 and 1929 Bose travelled to various parts of the country to arouse and harness their enthusiasm and prepare them for the battle he knew was inevitable. He also used such occasions to argue, to discuss and to organise his developing political ideas – on the reconstruction of a glorious Indian past, on the need for social restructuring, on the problem of harnessing mass consciousness, on the economic reconstruction of India, and including his belief that democracy was as Indian as the Himalayas. He agreed that the Congress should ally itself with labour, though he thought:

> It would be disastrous in the highest degree if we were to launch on a class war while we are all bed fellows in slavery in order that we may afford amusement to the common enemy.

Only with class collaboration could freedom be won. It would form the basis of the coming struggle: the strikes, the *hartals*, the boycott of British cloth, goods and institutions, the flooding of British jails and, finally, the supplanting of the Raj by the Congress, whose offices and committees in districts, villages and city wards would become the parallel government of a free, sovereign, democratic India. Freedom, of course, was to him an end in itself:

> Freedom is as necessary for the human soul as oxygen is for the human lungs. . . . Freedom is the real *amrita*, the real nectar on this side of the grave.

But, though he wanted, in sweeping away all privileges and caste restrictions, to raise the status of women,

> I do not want the feminist movement of Europe and America to be reproduced in India. I have no love for bobbed hair and short skirts, on the other hand, I firmly believe that the women's movement in India will be inspired by our national ideals and traditions, and will follow its own distinctive course.

How this social reconstruction would come about he had not yet considered. But, although it would be some years before his economic views developed, he was already far ahead of his political contemporaries – none of whom, Nehru and the small number of communists apart, were prepared to go beyond Gandhi's ideas and his weekly missives in *Young India*.

In February 1929 Bose spoke at the Pabna Youth Conference in Bengal; in April at the Surma Valley Students' Conference in Assam; in June at the Jessore and Khulna Youth Conference, again in Bengal; in July at the Hooghly District Students' Conference in Calcutta's twin city; in October at the Punjab Students' Conference in Lahore; and in December at the Midnapore Youth Conference in Bengal and the Central and Berar Students' Conference at Amroali. To his audiences he was already a hero. The round cherub face, the

horn-rimmed glasses, the Gandhi cap which covered the encroaching baldness of his forehead but revealed hair at the back, the *chaddar* (a sort of wrap) just covering the *kurta*, all became the photographers' delight and almost a visible definition of nationalism. Unlike Gandhi, who could be strangely mystifying and full of esoteric advice, and Nehru, who was often cool and olympian, Subhas was direct, clear and always practical.

The Raj witnessed the rise of Bose and Nehru with alarm. On 4 January 1929 Harry Haig, the Home Secretary, expressed his department's feelings in a note to the Home Member:

> When the idea of independence first emerged, the Home Department considered there was a reasonable prospect that it would be generally recognised as either visionary or dangerous and that it would not be brought forward as a practical issue. In the last few months, however, independence has ceased to be an academic ideal. We are faced now with a party who, it would seem, mean to translate it into a definite policy and to organise themselves with a view to attaining their object by force. Active steps are already being taken to develop organisations with this end in view. Youth movements and volunteer organisations are being discussed and started. I think there is no doubt that Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose do not mean to stop at words; they are preparing for action.

The Raj had no intention of responding to Gandhi's call at the Calcutta Congress or of accepting the Nehru Report. Instead, in the great Raj tradition of selective but effective repression, Haig spelled out a solution:

> It would . . . probably be necessary in the first instance only to proceed against Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. These two men are the undoubted leaders of the new movement. Successful prosecution of these two followed by adequate sentences may do a good deal to disorganise the movement, and would act as a warning to many who are at present somewhat half-heartedly dabbling with these ideas.

On 8 January 1929 it was decided to request Bengal to report on

Subhas Bose and provide grounds for prosecution.

Bengal itself soon concluded:

> The appeal of Subhas *Babu* and his other revolutionary associates was not made in vain and they are getting active support from the youth association in carrying out all the items of their programme – both open and secret. The All-Bengal Youth Association has introduced a form of vow for the boycott of foreign goods, particularly clothes, which its members must take and induce others to subscribe to, while repeated exciting and inflammatory speeches and constant secret propaganda have so changed the outlook of the minds of the youth of Bengal that they are no longer afraid to give vent to seditious and bloodthirsty feelings and to declare openly their demand for complete independence.

However, as one secret Bengal note put it:

> [The] weakness of the whole revolutionary movement lies in the jealousies that permeate all the various branches. There is strong dissension among the political leaders. The attempt to amalgamate the two principal parties of revolution, the Jugantar and the Anushilan, have failed, and in every district the efforts of the group leaders are largely spent in trying to keep together and increase their own personal following.

The long-simmering fight between Bose and Sengupta had at last burst into the open. It was, of course, a reflection of the wider fight between Bose and Gandhi. Gandhi, as we have seen, never really controlled Bengal. The genuine Gandhians – the *khadi* crowd – were a small though tight minority in the Bengal Congress, living in their Gandhi-inspired *ashrams*, spinning yarn and fruitlessly trying to win the Bengal Congress. Sengupta, never a classical Gandhian, was by late 1929 their best bet. Lacking a leader, they enthusiastically took him up, and he them.

The quarrel also contained certain characteristic Bengali features – in particular the regional factor. While Subhas' ancestral town of Kodalia was in West Bengal, Sengupta's Chittagong was the heart of East Bengal. Bengalis from the two sides of the state (now respectively part of India, and the separate nation of Bangladesh)

have always maintained a steady but fierce rivalry. It has been the subject of a great many inferior comedies, it has often prevented marriages or at least made them uncomfortable, and it is even enshrined in the soccer rivalry between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal – two of Calcutta's greatest football clubs, whose matches provide moments of collective Bengali hysteria. The West thinks the East is insensitive, brutish, ignorant, a collection of country rustics forever in need of education; the East thinks the West is sly, effeminate, shifty and living on the dubious glories of Calcutta. Bose had general support all over Bengal, both in the East and in parts of the politically more conscious West, while Sengupta had good support in Calcutta.

Predictably, Jugantar and Anushilan took opposite sides; as Sengupta prepared to fight Bose, he found ready allies among the Anushilan revolutionaries. If Bose, as the government claimed, was a leader of Jugantar, its support for him was natural. Besides, he was Das' natural heir, and Jugantar had worked happily with Das, while Anushilan had opposed Das and non-co-operation.

Perhaps, as some have suggested, the quarrel was fuelled by a personal quest for power by both men. No major policy differences seem to have marked the initial break. Till 1928 Bose and Sengupta had worked together – Bose had been president of the Bengal Congress and Sengupta busy with the Bengal Legislative Council and his practice at the Bar. That year Bose stood for Mayor of Calcutta, and – though the entire Congress united behind him – B.K. Basu, a Liberal, was elected. There was some feeling in the Sengupta camp that, if Sengupta had continued, this defeat could have been avoided; Bose's men may have felt that Sengupta had not really worked for them.

As the 1929 Bengal Congress elections approached, Bose's campaign was masterminded by Kiran Shankar Roy, an astute 'machine man' who lacked Bose's personal ambition but was his adroit supporter behind the scenes, particularly when it came to the enrolment of party members who would be loyal to Subhas. With his help, Bose gained a convincing majority in the provincial executive, and was elected president. Sengupta alleged rigging. The upshot was that the Bengal Congress split into two separate groups, both for the annual session in Lahore and during the civil-disobedience movement of the following year. Bose, snubbed at

Lahore by Gandhi, announced (along with another outcast) the formation of the Congress Democratic Party. This breakaway group was, however, short-lived; and the whole episode provides interesting evidence of Subhas' discomfiture in factional politics.

The older Congress warriors, however, were becoming tired and apprehensive of the radicals' activities. Through 1929 various Indian 'moderates', including Motilal, shuttled between the Raj and Gandhi to get a compromise going. The Viceroy, Irwin, was keen (as he later put it) to apply 'the touch that carries with it healing and health'. The whole debate revolved round the definition of dominion status. Lord Birkenhead, a previous Secretary of State, had declared the phrase could not really apply because 'India was not the case of a daughter nation of our own creed and of our own blood.' However, Gandhi's *Ramrajya* could be comfortably reconciled with British ideas, since he sought a moral transformation, not a political one. Now Motilal reportedly stated (to the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court):

> Once we get dominion status of any quality – in however limited a degree – we shall be content to prove ourselves responsible, and, then, readily, and without argument, be given other and wider powers as with the passing of time we prove ourselves capable.

Irwin at first resisted, but quickly saw that domestic British politics, with the ousting of the Tories and Birkenhead, had given him his chance, and on 31 October 1929 made his famous statement:

> It is implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as here contemplated, is the attainment of dominion status.

After the Simon Commission had reported, he promised a round-table conference to discuss its findings.

This was not quite as revolutionary as the Raj made it out to be, or as its apologists have claimed. For Irwin dominion status was a long way off. His statement was a declaration of an ultimate policy – like, as he noted, a child's being promised full family rights on adulthood. Paternalism and dependency were still part of the Raj.

Bose and thirty other Indian leaders met at Vallabhbhai Patel's Delhi house on 1 and 2 November 1929. The galaxy of Indian moderates – Gandhi, Motilal, Sapru, Malaviya, Vallabhbhai Patel, Moonje, Ansari, Sastri, Mrs Besant, Mrs Naidu – issued a joint declaration thanking the Viceroy for his sincerity and promising all help in forming a dominion constitution for India. Jawaharlal Nehru at first indignantly refused to follow his father, but could not overcome Gandhi, who had just made Jawaharlal president for the forthcoming Lahore Congress. In what to Bose was to become a sickeningly familiar pattern, he accepted Gandhi's policy and then lamented to whoever would listen how broken-hearted he was.

For Bose all this was anathema, and he refused to sign the declaration, resigned from the Congress Working Committee and issued a counter-manifesto. Dominion status, he said, was a myth, and a round-table conference would only be meaningful if it was a free meeting between representatives of India and Britain to discuss terms of British withdrawal.

Moreover, Gandhi himself rapidly became convinced that independence could not be diluted. Though he had supported 'moderate' positions, he had kept a sharp eye on the Congress organisation, spoken to Jawaharlal Nehru about the need to keep it in good shape, and tried, as in 1920 – to get the Muslim leaders behind him. One of his main concerns was to do something to appease the increasingly restless young led by Subhas and Jawaharlal. He had realised that if he weaned Jawaharlal away he would weaken this youth axis. They were the future. He was 61, Motilal was 69 and fast fading, and none of the liberals had a mass following. If Nehru was aligned to him, he could be sure of half of that future; and Nehru, as Irwin shrewdly observed, knew that 'his material interest and his political future depend, for the present at any rate, on his alliance with Mr Gandhi.'

Just before the Lahore Congress Gandhi met Irwin. The Viceroy failed to give him any assurance about dominion status, and thus committed him to become an 'independencewallah'. When the Congress met in Lahore, Gandhi himself moved the resolution calling for complete independence.

Bose took malicious delight from the fact that he had urged this in Calcutta a year ago; but he was still a critic because Gandhi had proposed no plans to back up a civil-disobedience movement by

setting up a parallel government. It was still very much a case of 'Leave it to the Mahatma – his inner light will come up with the right answer'. In his amendment speech Bose argued that the Congress aim should be a parallel government and that it start immediate and intensive mobilisation of youth, workers, peasants, etc. Swaraj must mean 'complete severance of the British connection' and a harnessing of all the have-nots of India in a final struggle against alien rule.

'Hear, hear!' shouted his listeners (and the police spies dutifully took it down), but when the votes were taken the hands went up for Gandhi. Several other amendments were also defeated, and before the evening was over the air was rent with the usual cry of 'Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai*'. As Sengupta had asked, 'Do you have in India today any other leader who can lead the country to victory than Mahatma Gandhi?'

Bose's speech had, however, kept S.I. Sale, Legal Remembrancer of the Punjab, busy. He had examined some of the conference speeches and come to the conclusion that Bose could be prosecuted. Nehru's speech was a rambling one about 'world movements', 'world co-operation', etc., but Bose's object, he said, was 'to paralyse government and compel government to abdicate in favour of their "complete independence"'. Anything constitutional is abhorrent to Mr. Bose. In talking of a Round Table Conference he makes it clear that his main objection is to the implication that the British Parliament has any right to intertere.' He had, concluded Sale, violated several sections of the penal code, but when this opinion reached Delhi, Harry Haig wrote that it was 'by this time rather ancient history'. Moreover, 'at the moment we are waiting to see to what extent and in what direction the Congress leaders intend to give effect to the policy laid down at the Congress'.

In any case the Raj had at last dealt with Bose in a court of law, for only the second time in his life.

On 23 January 1930 the Calcutta High Court had sentenced Bose and others to one year's rigorous imprisonment for the procession Bose had led in Calcutta in August 1929 in protest against government repression of revolutionaries and political prisoners. It had been a characteristic Bose-led demonstration: volunteers wearing uniforms, and Bose himself leading a whole contingent of marching, singing, placard-carrying volunteers. He had been arrested

immediately afterwards and released on bail. Even after sentencing him the magistrate was prepared to grant bail if Bose and the others would promise on their honour 'to lead ordinary lives of private citizens'. Bose contemptuously refused the offer. At Lahore the Congress had decided to celebrate 26 January as 'Independence Day' to mark its conversion to the goal of full independence. That was only three days away – there were bound to be celebrations and such promises were foreign to Bose anyway. Watched by a large crowd, Bose, Kiran Shankar Roy and ten others were taken away from the court compound in police vans, amidst resounding cries of 'Long live revolution', to the Alipore Central Jail. (Subsequently, after an appeal filed in the High Court, the sentences were reduced to nine months.)

Jail was a relief after the political intrigues, the bitter quarrels and the factional disputes of the last two years, and Bose soon settled down to a routine. He tried to keep fit, read voraciously and was the centre of the inevitable political debates and discussions with colleagues. He also tried to organise political education for the non-political prisoners, and he partitioned off a corner of his cell for prayer and meditation.

As Bose watched from prison Gandhi, at last, commenced the movement Bose had long argued and pleaded for. It was the second of the three great national movements launched by Gandhi. The first, as we have seen, had encouraged Bose not to go into the ICS but to join Das and the freedom struggle. The third, the Quit India movement, would be launched when Bose was in Germany. The second was undoubtedly Gandhi's most spectacular. It came close to unnerving the government: years later British officials and businessmen would recollect with anger 'the total breakdown of administrative breakdown' and at its height even Bose would wonder and reflect on Gandhi's political genius.

Yet, like almost everybody else, he was confused by the Mahatma's first moves. Gandhi first wrote to the Viceroy promising not to start his civil-disobedience campaign if he carried out certain social reforms such as total prohibition and the abolition of the tax on the making of salt. There was no mention of dominion status, let alone independence, in all this. How, Bose wondered, could social reform achieve that. But Gandhi had shrewdly seized on a subject that he knew could bridge the elitist preoccupation with

independence and the poor masses' struggle to survive. For centuries Indians had panned sea-water to make salt. Now the alien British government had taxed it and restricted manufacture to salt works. This for the poor was the true meaning of alien rule. As Irwin contemptuously rejected Gandhi's letter, the old man set out on his historic march to Dandi on the sea – 240 miles from his *ashram* near Sabarmati. It was a carefully organised route and all along the way Gandhi attracted support. On 6 April 1930 Gandhi took up a lump of mud and salt from the beach near Dandi, and nationalist Indians were swept up into the civil disobedience movement. Before the year was out, 60,000 – possibly 90,000 – had been jailed and the government had to make do with temporary huts to house inmates. There was a desperate response by the police, including firing on unarmed crowds, and, as correspondents reported, sickening use of *lathis*, by the summer Irwin was forced to concede that he was in difficulties.

Bose himself experienced some of this violence. He always suffered in prison, but so far there had been no intimidation or torture now, for the first and only time in a British jail, he was the subject of an assault. It is still not clear how or why it took place – it may have been the eccentricity of the superintendent or, more likely, the inevitable result of repressive machinery at full throttle. The superintendent, Major Som Dutt, was fond of using Pathans from the north-west frontier to straighten out the young rebels crowding his jail. On the 27 April 1930 these Pathans, [illegible] for their home ways, suddenly encountered spirited resistance. Dutt decided on a [illegible] of force, and got the Anglo-Indian prisoners to attack the [illegible]. Bose and the others rushed out of their cells to find out what the commotion was all about. There was a struggle, and Bose was knocked unconscious. The news quickly spread through Calcutta and many surrounded Alipore Central. [illegible] persuaded to leave him, though the government would not [illegible] an inquiry, Dutt was transferred.

Bose was still president of the Bengal Provincial Congress, and tried to guide it via a fairly effective underground system. The jailer had become a friend, and allowed Bose to struggle out messages and letters through three Anglo-Indian [illegible], who gave them to Ashoke, Sarat's [illegible]. Certainly there was unprecedented [illegible] for the civil disobedience movement, but the Bengal

Congress was still split. In April Sengupta was arrested and brought to Alipore Central. He was given a cell next to Bose's, and there were attempts at a reconciliation. But any chance of that was ruined by the rivalry about the Calcutta Corporation and what Bose saw as Sengupta's determination to cling to office. This particular dispute ended with Bose's election as Mayor of Calcutta.

We have discussed Subhas' love for the Corporation, and there is much to be said in its favour: yet the dichotomy remains – Subhas Bose, the revolutionary, seeking to destroy the British, yet glorying in using one of their most characteristic institutions. The Corporation was useful because it provided a chance for power in a limited but effective sphere, and there was undoubtedly the attraction of patronage. Besides, the Congress civil-disobedience campaigns meant that none of the Raj's institutions were available, and the Corporation provided an honourable exception – as British intelligence agents were quick to note. Subhas Bose saw it as a place to demonstrate that Indians could do good as well. But such a course had its dangers, and at least one critic – Nirad Chaudhuri – has concluded that the Corporation fatally attracted Subhas, diverting him from real power in the Congress Working Committee to the ways of the 'hard-boiled and worldly middle-class of Calcutta, to whom civic welfare meant welfare of their class'. Bose was released on 5 September 1930 and sworn in as Mayor on 24 September. His inaugural speech is noteworthy for one passage in particular:

> I would say that we have here in this policy and programme a synthesis of what modern Europe calls socialism and fascism. We have here the justice, the equality, the love which is the basis of socialism, and combined with that we have the efficiency and the discipline of fascism as it stands in Europe today.

Once elected, Bose did not forget the wider needs of the Congress, and he toured Bengal incessantly, preparing for a resumption of the civil-disobedience movement, which had not so much stopped as slowly wound down – Gandhi's incarceration having led to renewed attempts at a compromise between the Congress and the Raj. He was arrested and jailed for seven days for trying to enter Malda in south Bengal. And as the peace efforts gathered momentum he set about celebrating Independence Day on 26 January 1931.

Charles Tegart, the Commissioner of Police, had been sent intercepted copies of Congress Party instructions regarding the celebrations, and he was horrified that resolutions recording the suffering and sacrifice of the freedom fighters, cataloguing the police brutalities and re-affirming the goal of independence should be heard 'on the central *maidan* in Calcutta, virtually within earshot of Government House'. He was determined not to allow the demonstration, for that would mean 'thousands would have flocked to the *maidan*, traffic would have been blocked and the control of the city would have been handed over to the Congress'. But he feared the consequences of a clash with Bose, and on the morning of the 26th sent one of his officers, Mr Pulin Chatterjee, to try and dissuade him. Bose replied, 'Tell your boss I will break the law,' and strode off.

Tegart's massive police arrangements deterred the crowds until, at 4.20 p.m., Subhas led five hundred men out of the town hall on to Corporation Street. This led directly to that part of Chowringhee which was smack opposite the Octroleny monument; singing and shouting lustily, Bose marched his followers to their target. Just as they got on to Chowringhee they were stopped, and Bose was shown a copy of an order by the Commissioner. Bose brushed aside the policeman and, gripping the national flag even more tightly, kept on marching towards the monument. The police attempted to snatch the flag. Bose resisted, and he was *lathi*-charged and badly bruised, suffering contusion over the right side of the forehead and the back of the head; his right arm and clothes were liberally splattered with his own blood. The following day he appeared before the Chief Presidency Magistrate. As a non-co-operator he refused to plead or take part in the proceedings, and was quickly found guilty and sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment.

Just as Subhas had watched the launch of the civil-disobedience struggle from jail, he now watched from jail its dénouement. A meeting between Gandhi and Irwin led to the Delhi Pact. Gandhi promised to call off the civil-disobedience movement and take part in a round-table conference, while Irwin agreed to release all political prisoners arrested in connection with the movement, to withdraw the emergency ordinances, to allow people who lived within a certain distance of the sea to make salt, and to permit peaceful propaganda in favour of prohibition and against foreign cloth. But

there was no mention of 'Purna Swaraj' – independence: the great issue over which they had fought.

Bose saw the pact as a betrayal, and believed that Gandhi had acted under pressure from his rich backers, who had panicked, and the increasingly powerful Congress Right. In March he visited Gandhi in Bombay and was further depressed to find that the enquiry on police atrocities which was a central plank in the Congress demands had been voluntarily thrown away by the Mahatma. But what could Bose do? Gandhi was a hero, a saint – the man who had discussed, debated and signed an agreement with the Viceroy on seemingly equal terms. The Congress session which followed the signing of the Delhi Pact re-affirmed Gandhi's power – and the Left just disappeared. (The Viceroy gleefully reported: 'Later opposition of Subhas absolutely collapsed'.) The only thing to do was to record one's views and present the proper analysis.

Bose's subsequent speech to the militant socialist Punjab youth organisation Naw Jawan Bharat Sabha is interesting as one of his first specifically detailed references to a socialist India. Freedom was an absolute necessity, but it must include freedom from social, economic and political bondage: a full-fledged socialist republic. Class collaboration would not do.

But, though his ideas were constantly developing, he was still out in the cold. Gandhi once again kept him out of the Working Committee – an astonishing situation for the president of a powerful provincial Congress committee to be in; and the messy fight with Sengupta reached its unsatisfactory climax. On his return to Calcutta from the session at Karachi, Bose made an appeal for peace. He declared that he was prepared to renounce the post of Mayor and hoped everybody would now unite behind a single Congress committee. Sengupta was unconvinced and continued to organise his own rival Congress.

By June 1931, when the outlying districts started voting for the delegates who would represent them on the provincial executive and the A.I.C.C., Sengupta was convinced that he would not win without central support, and he appealed to his patron Gandhi. Bose and Sengupta met at least once but only succeeded in worsening the situation, and the Congress president, Vallabhbhai Patel, deputed M.S. Aney to examine and report on the situation in the province. When he arrived in mid-July there followed a flurry of

meetings, talks about settlement, talks about the talks, and yet more warfare (even at times, violent disruption of rival meetings). The struggle affected everything, including organising relief from the floods that were then devastating Bengal.

W.S. Hoskyns, Chief Secretary of the Bengal government, noted with pleasure:

> The Corporation is in bad odour; the rows organised by the followers of Mr. Sengupta and Mr. Subhas Bose in the Council Chambers of the Corporation have disgusted all decent opinion. . . . Moderate Indian opinion is perhaps stronger now against the party responsible for civil disobedience than it has been for a long time.

Hoskyns' satisfaction increased as he watched the reaction to the Hijli firings. The Hijli detention camps housed some 2,000 of the most resolute of the freedom fighters of Midnapore, where civil disobedience had been especially strong. On the night of 16 September some fracas had developed and the jail police had shot two men dead. The news convulsed Bengal, and for Bose it was yet another illustration of the failure of the Delhi Pact. He rushed to Hijli, brought the dead bodies back to Calcutta and led nearly 100,000 mourners to the burning *ghat* for the cremation. The provincial Congress committee had arranged a condolence meeting after the funeral; as Bose was about to leave for it he heard that Sengupta was going to address a rival one at the same time. In one of the quick, emotional gestures that characterised his politics, Bose telephoned Sengupta, cancelled his own meeting and agreed to attend the one to be held by him. He also announced his resignation from the presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. This was a moment for unity, he declared. Unity through negotiations had failed; his own reconciliation efforts had got nowhere. He had done no wrong – he had run the Congress according to the rules. He had been thinking of resigning for some time, and Hijli had convinced him. Then, in a typically extravagant statement, he concluded,

> If Bengal can be saved as a result of my self effacement I shall be happy to pay that price and I shall feel more than amply rewarded if my countrymen will in exchange give me a corner in their hearts.

Sengupta, however, could do little with the corner that Bose had given him – or with the even larger one that Aney finally awarded: the entire provincial Congress committee. (Aney had decided that Bose and his men were in the wrong.) Sick since his civil-disobedience imprisonment, Sengupta now went off to Europe to recover his health and possibly consult Gandhi, who had just left for a round-table conference. Bose remained the *de facto* leader of the Bengal Congress – a winner by default.

One of the things about Gandhi's trip to Europe that had disturbed Bose most was his insistence on travelling alone. Bose would have preferred a proper delegation and, of course, a genuine round-table conference concerning independence negotiations. Gandhi's behaviour in England further appalled him: there was too much of the naked fakir – living in the East End, being photographed with Chaplin – and not enough of the insurrectionary leader. In Bose's view the only good thing about Gandhi's visit was his meeting on the way back with Mussolini, who Bose thought was 'a man who really counts in the politics of modern Europe'.

What worried Bose even more was that these fruitless months of negotiations had dulled the Congress appetite for mass action and provided time for the government to prepare. Though he was not privy to government files (and these files amply prove, as D.A. Low has demonstrated, that the government used the breathing-space to fashion its repressive response to any future civil-disobedience movement), he could see that the government was not serious about the Delhi Pact. The flamboyant Red Shirt movement of the North-West Frontier Province, led by Khan Abdul Gaffoor Khan, was still being ruthlessly suppressed and, in Bengal, Chittagong was under virtual martial law. Bose himself was arrested for trying to investigate events in Dacca.

There, on 28 October 1931, the district magistrate had been shot and wounded. The police, unable to find the culprits, laid siege to a considerable area of Dacca: houses were raided, valuables and documents seized, and anybody who was remotely a nationalist was apprehended or harassed. Bose presided over a huge public meeting at Calcutta's Albert Hall to protest at this display of police *zoolum* (repression) and set off with two companions to make an on-the-spot survey. As his steamer arrived at Narayangunge, a sub-divisional town on the way to Dacca, he was met by Ellison, the

Additional Superintendent of Police at Dacca, and other officials. They refused to allow him to disembark from the steamer. When he eventually did, he was taken to the police station, Ellison protesting all the time that he was not arresting him but merely restraining him. Ellison incensed Bose by referring to him as Subhas – familiarity that was allowed only to friends, and certainly not to the officials of the Raj. 'Do you mind? I am Subhas Babu or Mr Bose to you.' Ellison gracelessly yielded, but would not allow him to enter Dacca, and put him on a Calcutta-bound steamer.

Bose persisted. This time he tried to enter Dacca from the north. At Tejgaon he was arrested under section 144 of the Criminal Police Code – an order promulgated at times of civil disorder – and taken to Dacca Jail. Vallabhbhai Patel had telegraphed him not to get arrested, but Bose had been unable to see a way of avoiding it. 'Self-respect, manhood and the rights of the people have been trampled underfoot,' he declared as he was led away, 'and it is the duty of the people to vindicate them.' He was no longer head of the Congress, and, if the Congress did not act, the people would have to organise themselves.

In the past, such remarks had got him into trouble with the Congress high command. In October he had told the Bengal Provincial Students' Conference that the Congress leaders did not seem interested in helping Bengal fight government repression. Patel had written to Jawaharlal Nehru protesting his innocence, and Nehru himself came to Calcutta and lectured Bengal rather superciliously on the need for party unity. For Subhas nothing could have been more galling, and he decided to issue a statement rebutting Nehru – the first public indication of the growing tension between the two. Bengal had done much, he said; who was Nehru to lecture the provinces? Bengal had led India in the past, and it would do so again in the future.

Though he spoke at the annual Bengal provincial conference as an ordinary Congressman, his definition of the problems ('to check the progress of repressive policy and to organise the scattered national forces') was quickly accepted. The provincial Congress decided that the 'government had practically ended the Gandhi–Irwin pact' and that it was now time to resume the *satyagraha* campaign. Until this was officially accepted by the Congress there should be an intensification of the boycott of foreign goods and a

proper no-rent campaign.

However, Bose wanted time. He did not think any of the Bengal districts were just at that moment ready for civil disobedience, though in another three or four months things might be looking up. Time was the thing he was arguing for. But time was the one thing the Raj was determined not to give the national movement. Bengal was already under Ordinance Raj, as the Indians liked to put it. On 30 November the provincial government had secured the Viceroy's permission to promulgate yet another ordinance that allowed it extraordinary powers to deal with the growing revolutionary movement: trial by special tribunals, imposition of collective fines, internment. Bose and his activities had weighed on the government mind. The Viceroy had read with alarm Subhas' speech to the Bengal provincial conference, and referred to it in his telegram to the Secretary of State on 19 December 1931, in which he confessed the total lack of support for government policies.

But the Bengal ordinances were only the visible fangs of a policy that had been in preparation ever since the Gandhi–Irwin pact had been signed. It would soon lead to a second civil-disobedience movement, attracting even greater repression. The common historical view is that this was due to the change of Viceroy: Irwin had retired and had been replaced by Willingdon, more of an old India hand (he had been governor in Bombay and Madras). Though this undoubtedly played a part, Willingdon was responding to pressures from British officials in India. Long before he succeeded to Irwin's Viceregal palace, these men had decided that, if another civil-disobedience movement arose, they should have the means to crush it. The first had scared them badly, and they were determined not to be caught napping.

9

RE-ENTER REVOLUTION

The revolutionary movement had always closely paralleled the Gandhian one, and in early 1930 it had undergone a remarkable revival. As Gandhi reached Dandi and the sea it had, in what the government called 'an amazing coup', very nearly succeeded in liberating one of British India's most important towns: Chittagong.

There, on the night of 18 April 1930, sixty-two young Indians seized the police and auxiliary forces' armouries and set up a provisional revolutionary government. Although, through lack of proper planning – they had failed to cut off completely Chittagong's telegraphic link with India – and faulty leadership, they enabled the British swiftly to recapture the city, this marked the start of a remarkable wave of revolutionary violence. No police officer, whether Indian or British, was immune from attack; bombs exploded in government offices; and on 8 December 1930 three men coolly entered Writers' Building and shot and killed the Inspector-General of Police.

Occasionally the revolutionaries were stupid. On 25 August 1930 two young revolutionaries, Amiya Sen and Dinesh Chandra Mazumdar, stood exactly opposite each other across Calcutta's Dalhousie Square and lobbed bombs at a car carrying Tegart. Mazumdar's bomb hit Sen, killing him instantly; Sen's bomb hit Mazumdar, wounding him severely. Tegart drove past unhurt. But by the end of 1930 British officials were horrified at their losses: eleven killed, twelve injured, with ten non-officials killed and fourteen injured. (The revolutionaries' losses were greater – twenty-six killed and four injured.)

One judge trying some revolutionaries warned that immediately after giving judgement he would leave 'the country without leave', and Nirad Chaudhuri, walking the streets of Calcutta, felt a wave of what he called 'unbelievable hysteria' sweep the British community in Bengal. Anglican clergymen slept with revolvers under their pillows, Englishwomen were terrified of contracting venereal disease from suspicious-looking handkerchiefs that were said to have often been left in tramcars, and in at least one politically active district police officers thought they saw in all this the beginnings of an Irish-type revolutionary movement. By mid-1931 intelligence officials were asking for 'a freer hand' if 'disaster' were to be averted. By the end of the year this free hand was, perhaps inevitably, translated into the need to arrest Bose. On 7 December 1931 W.S. Hoskyns forwarded to the Home Department in Delhi a seventy-five-page document about Subhas. This formed a complete alleged record of almost all Bose's words and deeds between January 1930 and October 1931, as reported by government moles in the nationalist groups. It was the old story of Bose as financier of the revolutionaries (though the government believed this was more the work of Sarat), as friend, as confessor and as father-figure.

Without corroborative evidence it is impossible to judge the worth of TA10, AX19 and C82 (as the moles were code-named); but, spurred on by P.C. Bamford, an intelligence official, Delhi was quick to accept Bengal's arguments. The only trouble was that Bengal, fearful of the consequences of arresting Bose within its own borders, insisted he be arrested outside Bengal. This meant he would have to be arrested under Regulation III of 1818, which required that the evidence of the moles be reviewed by two judges. After much deliberation Delhi thought the evidence would stand up, a decision helped by the fact that it had its own mole in the Congress Working Committee itself, 'SS', who reported that 'Subhas Bose . . . pleaded the cause of terrorism', at at least one meeting. On 22 December 1931, after joint discussions between the Viceroy's Executive Council and the Bengal government, Delhi posted the warrant of arrest to the Bengal government. They now waited for Bose to leave Bengal and activate the carefully constructed machinery.

In early December Bose travelled to Bombay for a session of the Working Committee scheduled for Gandhi's return. The young, he

told Gandhi, would no longer tolerate useless talk and dilatory tactics, and he urged him to take careful note of what was happening in Bengal, where the coming shape of the Raj's repression was clear. His militant urgings were given an unexpected edge by Willingdon's refusal to see Gandhi save on unacceptable conditions. By the morning of New Year 1932 Bose had at last persuaded Gandhi to declare that, if the Viceroy could not go back on this, the Delhi Pact would be over and civil disobedience resumed. Willingdon telegraphed that he could not see Gandhi under the threat of civil disobedience, and the Congress was at last made to realise that the phoney peace was over.

The next day Bose, eagerly anticipating the coming war, started on his way back to Calcutta. As the train stopped at Kalyan the Bengal police, already on the train, boarded his compartment, served him with a warrant and took him off the train. Two days later he was taken to Seoni Jail. The Bengal government, in fact, had selected another jail in the same province for him: Bethul. But their police had failed to arrest him at Poona (where he had stopped on his way from Calcutta to Bombay) and his arrest at Kalyan was a hasty, last-minute affair. Seoni was the nearest jail to Kalyan, but the staff were so surprised to see Bose that the governor of the province later complained to Delhi about the way Bengal had handled the whole affair.

Seoni was a sub-jail with no electricity and few amenities, and it was hardly surprising that within a few weeks Subhas fell ill. His state of mind was not helped by the government's arresting Sarat on 4 February – on the grounds that he provided Subhas' finance – and bringing him to Seoni. By mid-April Subhas' health had so alarmed the superintendent of Seoni Jail that he asked for Subhas to be transferred. Medically, Calcutta would have been the natural place, but the Bengal government would not hear of it, and on 30 May Subhas was transferred to Jubbalpore Military Hospital. But this could only be a stop-gap and, as in 1927, the government of India began to shop around for a suitable jail. No government, however, seemed prepared to risk him, with the Punjab government frankly acknowledging that 'Subhas Chandra Bose has always had a disturbing effect on Lahore students, who always turn out in large numbers whenever he visits the Punjab', and that, if brought to the Punjab, 'his stay in Lahore should be as short as possible'.

Finally, after a great deal of arm-twisting from the government of India, the Madras government accepted him. On 16 July Subhas was transferred to Madras. Here there were more medical examinations, and by August doctors were convinced he was suffering from tuberculosis, which could only be completely cured in Switzerland. But Delhi, remembering the turmoil such a suggestion had caused during Bose's previous period in jail, decided upon a sanatorium in Bhowali. With Bengal being difficult at every stage, it was the middle of October before Bose was transferred there, only for the Raj to discover that the sanatorium closed down for winter on 15 December. By early December yet another Medical Board had recommended a stay in Calcutta's prestigious Medical College, on the way to Switzerland. Though the Bengal government reacted with predictable hostility to any stay in Calcutta, it was prepared to agree to Switzerland without asking for any pre-conditions.

Everything seemed ready for this when, for the first time, there was a comic touch. Agents of Williamson, a Delhi-based intelligence official, had seized certain letters written by Bose allegedly arguing for violent revolutionary action. Williamson was convinced that at last the government could mount a successful prosecution against him on this score. But Delhi did not share his enthusiasm, and on 12 January 1933 a passport was issued for Bose's travel to Europe. It had only been endorsed for France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Denmark – Great Britain and Germany were expressly excluded.

It was another month before Bose actually sailed from India, a month taken up by wrangles between Bose and the government as he unsuccessfully sought time to settle his affairs before leaving. He wanted to visit his parents but the Bengal government could see no way of allowing him to visit Calcutta, and they were too old and sick to travel. With Sarat in jail, it was Sarat's wife, Bibavati, who was really managing affairs, and Subhas thought it only reasonable that he should be allowed to meet her frequently and plan steps to raise the cash for going to Europe, estimated at 15,000 rupees (£1,200). But the government limited the interviews and insisted that all conversation between Subhas and his relations had to be in English, in the hearing of police officers. Subhas was outraged, and in several thunderous letters to the Home Department in Delhi he

expressed the view that the government, by 'kicking him about like a football', had ruined his health, and said that he 'scented trouble' in the way the government were restricting his passport. Finally, just before he left for Europe, he was allowed to meet Sarat and some of his relations in Jubbalpore Jail without humiliating restrictions.

He was still under custody on 23 February 1933 as the Bombay police escorted him to his ship; and he was only released when the ship had left Indian waters. This produced a final angry letter to the government, though his mood of anguish and suffering was more accurately reflected in a statement that defensively acknowledged help from friends who had enabled him to put the money together. He was doubtful if even Europe would restore his health, and as the boat neared Venice he wrote to Dilip confessing that he had taken to tantra – an esoteric Indian philosophic system – in order to get his spirits moving again.

PART III

EXILE

In international economics and international politics the Indian question is allowed to be treated as a domestic question between England and India in which the world at large has no right to interfere. But India should not take this position lying down. . . . India is entitled to bring her case before the bar of world opinion. . . . In this connection I desire to urge upon my countrymen the dire necessity of appointing accredited representatives of India in foreign countries. . . . Even if representatives cannot be sent out from India owing to lack of funds there are Indians abroad who would be prepared to work even for love. The more one lives in Europe, the more one realises the great want of propaganda on behalf of India in foreign countries. And without international propaganda, India cannot possibly establish herself in the eyes of the world.

Subhas Bose, in a letter from Vienna,
7 June 1933

10

THE AMBASSADOR WITH A CAUSE

In March 1931 M.N. Roy, one of the great romantic figures of the Indian political scene, had met Bose and sat down to a long political talk with him. At the end of it Roy returned to his friends and said of Bose, 'He is full of Bharat Mata [Mother India] – nothing else.'

It is a damning anecdote, and for many the most revealing insight into Bose's character: that of an ultra-nationalist who had no time for anything else, who despite all his years in Europe never developed a proper world outlook. Bose's eclecticism – or what one of his more uncritical supporters has called his rejection of monotheism (the one path to salvation) – made him pursue any movement that would help the cause of Indian freedom. Making a peninsula into a goddess, as Dilip Roy puts it, led him into strange pathways, and occasionally cul-de-sacs and dead ends. But, although consideration of Bharat Mata always remained the final arbiter, he was constantly aware of what he was doing and where he was going. He was clear, for instance, about the dangers of Nazism, and his analysis of Hitler's movement was a good deal more penetrating than that voiced by some of its more celebrated enemies. However, he believed that a slave India could not afford the luxury of choosing friends – she had to make do with what was offered. This certainly made him blind to the fact that Nazism would have been an even greater scourge of India than the Raj, and it is true that his pragmatism ran close to opportunism.

Bose had always stressed the need to get away from colonial

attachments to England – attachments which, he felt, the English had sedulously cultivated. Too few Indians, he had moaned to relations and friends, visited Berlin, Paris or Rome – they always stuck to London. His present trip on the Italian liner S.S. *Ganges* did much to erase the starchy memory of the P. & O. liner on which he had sailed before. The Italians fussed over him, and at Venice there was a large contingent from the press to interview him. In Vienna there were more interviews and, soon after he had settled in at Dr Fuerth's sanatorium, his room became the centre for a fair bit of Indian activity: students constantly dropped in, visitors from India never missed it; and there were Nilima and her friends. The presence of these last marked perhaps the most significant change that Dilip had wrought in Subhas.

Before his departure for Europe, Bose had requested letters of introduction from several people. Gandhi had informed him just as his ship was to sail that he could not provide him with one. Only Dilip had recognised his need to widen his contacts – particularly with respect to desirable female company. For us the Nilimas of the world are familiar: Westerners who, dissatisfied with their own culture, turn to the East. Nilima had been born Heddy Fullop-Muller, and was a distinguished opera singer and the wife of a well-known Austrian writer who had fallen under the spell of Aurobindo. She was soon writing to Dilip about this *wunderbar* friend of his, about his *Seelensgrosse* (greatness of soul), his humility and his unspoilt, child-like innocence. Nilima guided Subhas into the right social and literary circles of Vienna, and, though the relationship was strictly platonic, Subhas' armour was breached. The result was that, despite his travels in Europe over the next three years, Vienna remained his headquarters.

Bose was not happy with Dr Fuerth's diagnosis that the main problem lay not in the lungs but in the abdomen, particularly the gall-bladder and the duodenum. When, by the first week of March 1933, there had not been much progress, he wrote to the Secretary of State for India requesting extension of his passport facilities to Germany and England. The India Office had expected this, and their position was admirably minuted by W.J. Clauson on 25 March:

The objections to his visiting Berlin or London are well-known:

both are centres of Indian youth, inflammable material liable to be led into extremist paths. Even before he left India, when he was supposed to be very ill Bose was indulging in terrorist intrigues: he is, of course, a very experienced organiser, and his presence among the more or less unorganised or disorganised students in England or Germany would be likely to be very undesirable.

At the same time, subversive activities are for obvious reasons at so low an ebb in Germany – and this has a reaction on activities here, which have also to some extent been deprived of direction – that if Bose has to pay a visit, this may be the least bad moment for the purpose (yet again, on the other hand, he might do a lot of harm by 'stopping the rot').

On the whole, therefore, it might be best to say straightaway that Bose can go to Germany and leave it at that. If subsequently he insists on coming to England, it is, in fact, quite impossible to prevent him, as a British subject, from landing: but we must not encourage him.

On 8 May the India Office authorised the grant of passport facilities to Germany. But the Chief Passport Officer was told to instruct the Consul in Vienna to take 'special care . . . to add an endorsement for Germany only. It is particularly desired to prevent Mr. Bose from coming to this country.' Although, as one official noted, 'the withholding of an endorsement for the U.K. is nothing but bluff. Any holder of a British passport is admitted to this country.'

Would Bose call the bluff? He seemed to be prepared to do so when, in June 1933, he was invited to preside over the third Indian Political Conference, to be held in Blackfriars Hall, London. Bose accepted and got James Maxton, a Labour friend of India, to plead his case. The India Office had watched his increasingly frequent political announcements from Vienna with alarm, and Maxton's letter merely confirmed Clauson's suspicion that an application was due.

It is abundantly clear, therefore, that Bose does not want to come to London on grounds of health but for a political purpose. Last month, on the certificate of a Vienna doctor we gave him pass-

port facilities for Germany – a sanatorium in the Black Forest. His health could not possibly demand a visit to London.

But the government learnt that he had taken the Secretary of State's reply to Maxton as a refusal, and was not coming to London.

Instead, the speech was read out to a packed, cheering Blackfriars Hall. It was a milestone in his developing political philosophy. Ever since the civil-disobedience movement had been crushed, he had been thinking of a new approach. Now he had arrived at some conclusions. There could, he said, be no compromise with the British, because nothing united Britain and India – everything divided them: social and cultural factors, and above all economic ones; India was a raw-material producer, Britain a raw-material consumer. Britain in India was a well-fortified alien fortress surrounded by the great mass of Indian people. The fortress could not survive if the people turned hostile. This had happened to a great extent; now the final push was required: economic blockage and armed assault. The Congress creed ruled out armed assault, but it had not even applied economic blockage.

Something new was required. Bose proposed the formation of a party of socialism and revolution: the *Samyavadi Sangha*. This would be a centralised and well-disciplined all-India party, with representatives in the Indian National Congress and the All-India Trade Union Congress, in the peasants', women's and youth organisations and also in the sectarian and communal organisations if necessary. It would first fight the British, then fight to establish a caste-free, privilege-free India, equal in all respects.

Delhi wondered that to do.

> The question for consideration now is whether it might be preferable to take this opportunity of allowing Bose to proclaim himself an advocate of armed revolution, or whether it is better to stamp on him and his new organisation with both feet at this and every other opportunity. Personally, I think it will be better not to do what Bose himself would prefer that we should do. Safe in a foreign country, he obviously wishes to advertise himself as the Lenin of the coming Indian revolution and with this purpose he has had the temerity publicly to condemn Gandhi. I think that if government were to allow a publication of this presidential

address, its action would appear inexplicable to all those who have been made acquainted with Bose's designs and intentions in connection with the formation of the *Samyavadi Sangha*. In all the above circumstances, I recommend that the presidential address be banned under the Sea Customs Act.

The Home Secretary agreed.

Looked at superficially the split between Gandhi and Subhas is satisfactory and it might be held that it would pay us to widen the gap; temporarily there might be some tactical advantage. But any such slight tactical advantage would be playing into the hands of Subhas and the extremists.

The speech was duly banned. However, even as the government was congratulating itself on keeping Bose out of England, it became snared in its own bureaucracy. When Bose's passport had been issued at Allahabad on 13 February 1933, under the column 'Observations' had been written in red ink 'Not valid for entry into Germany or the United Kingdom.' On 25 March 1933 Bose approached the British Consul in Vienna. He had a close look at the passport, checked to see that Bose did not appear on the warning list, and endorsed it for Hungary and Czechoslovakia. On 24 April he added Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Norway and Denmark; and on 30 June J.W. Taylor, the British Vice-Consul in Prague, added Belgium, Holland and Poland, though he baulked at Egypt. Bose, who was only staying a few days in Prague, did not pursue the Egyptian matter further, and Taylor, feeling he had done his job, wrote exultantly to London.

However, these good and loyal representatives of His Majesty's government had overlooked the red ink. That was the India Office's own bureaucratic shorthand for saying that, leaving aside Germany and the U.K., no endorsements for other countries should be given without India Office permission. Clauson commented sourly:

This is amusing. While we ponderously debated here about Germany, the Consul at Vienna endorsed a passport for most

other countries in the world. But no doubt it does not matter. The more he travels, the more he may die, presumably.

Bose used the next year, till midsummer 1934, to make up for his lack of European education. All the endorsements except those for the Scandinavian countries were used: Prague, Berlin, Warsaw, Geneva, Rome, Milan, the Italian and French Rivieras, the Balkans – Bose visited many of these places more than once. Wherever he went he tried to learn about the political systems, the social values and, of course, the municipalities concerned. All the time, too, he tried to tell them about India. In letters, newspaper interviews, articles, he argued the case for India and the need for propaganda on its behalf. India should organise: it should learn to utilise international gatherings. Soon after his arrival in Vienna he carried on a spirited exchange of letters in the *Manchester Guardian* about political prisoners. As he began his travels he sought to link the Indian nationalist movement with the wider movement for freedom in central Europe.

His first foray outside Vienna, in June 1933, was to Prague. (He often returned to the city later, and formed a close liaison with Dr Lesny of the Oriental Institute there.) From Prague Bose visited Warsaw; then it seems, he tried to get to Moscow. But the Soviets, who never showed much enthusiasm for him, were not keen, and Bose set off – with some misgivings – for Berlin.

Germany should have been ideal for Bose. Here was a country whose leading intellectuals had had a long and fruitful love affair with the idealised Indian past. It was German scholars who, in the nineteenth century, rediscovered ancient Indian scholarship and ironically served as gurus for a generation of Indians who had forgotten the deeds of their ancestors. Politically, Indians fighting the British had looked, since the turn of the century, to Germany for sympathy and help. But with Hitler in power everything had changed. For him these freedom fighters were 'Asiatic jugglers' who could achieve little, and he once advised an astounded Halifax that the solution for Gandhi was simple: 'Shoot him.' India was a country in which Germany had little strategic and even less commercial interest, and which in any case was firmly excluded from civilisation by Nazi racial philosophy. Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi Germany's philosopher, who was credited with great insight into

Indian culture, could find little virtue in these 'poor bastards' and was convinced that from the 'Nordic as well as German point of view the British rule in India must be supported'. Bose, nevertheless, was convinced that something could be salvaged if only he could meet Hitler. Despite persistent efforts he failed, however, and Rosenberg was the only significant Nazi official he appears to have met in his years of exile. Predictably, nothing came of it. (Another woman-friend, Kitty Kurti, recollects that Bose mentioned a meeting with Goering, but there is no record of this.)

But Bose did establish contacts with the so-called Nazi left wing. For this he had to thank Lothar Frank. Frank and others had been attracted to Nazism by Hitler's vague populism and his talk of the radical changes necessary to remake the world – a fashionable concept in the beer-hall days. With Lothar Frank as his guide, Bose keenly studied this party within a party and compared it with the revolutionary organisations he had known in Bengal. He also arranged for material help for the Bengal revolutionaries: arms, ammunition and technical equipment. A secret code was devised within four tiny German–English dictionaries, and it was planned that these messages and the arms would be carried by merchant ships. But, in the event, the words of the dictionaries carried no coded messages; and, though German merchant ships called at Indian ports, they delivered no arms. It is not clear what exactly went wrong; possibly the trouble was that the Nazi 'radical' wing was, within a year, decimated in Hitler's bloody massacre of Captain Rohem and his men. When Frank met Bose during the war, he did so in great secrecy. The contacts, however, provided Bose with some idea of the Nazi intra-party struggles and, when Ashoke drew his attention to Rosenberg's writings, he consoled him with the thought, 'The rank and file, however, do not hold the views of the leaders.'

In Vienna in May 1933 Vithalbhai Patel, Vallabhbhai's brother, whom Subhas had met in Austria, and Bose had issued a strong statement condemning Gandhi. The Mahatma had watched helplessly from jail as the government had crushed the 1932 civil-disobedience campaign, and, seeking almost any issue to reactivate the moribund Congress, he had seized on the thorny question of communal electorates and reserved seats for Hindus, Muslims and Untouchables to launch a fast. Bose and Patel had met at the Hotel

de France and issued a warlike declaration. Bose thought Gandhi was a useless piece of furniture, and had fully convinced the aged Patel that he spoke for the young. They asserted:

> The time has . . . come for a radical reorganisation of the Congress on a new principle and with a new method. For bringing about this reorganisation a change of leadership is necessary, for it would be unfair to Mahatma Gandhi to expect him to evolve or work a programme and method not consistent with his lifelong principles. If the Congress as a whole can undergo the transformation, it would be the best course. Failing that, a new party will have to be formed within the Congress composed of all the radical elements.

That autumn Bose received an invitation to attend a students' conference in Italy, and to address the Oriental Institute which Mussolini was inaugurating.

Unlike the Germans, the Italians were only too eager to welcome Bose. Much of this was due to the groundwork laid by Dr Gino Scarpa, who, as Italian consul-general in Calcutta, had developed close contacts with Bose and other Congress leaders. With Dr Scarpa now well ensconced in the Foreign Office, Bose's stay was much pleasanter than in Germany, and he had no problems in seeing Mussolini. He met him three times on this visit and twice subsequently, and had long discussions with him about India.

'Do you really and firmly believe that India will be free soon?' asked Mussolini, once.

'Yes,' replied Bose.

Mussolini pressed further. 'Are you for reformist or revolutionary methods for achieving Indian independence?'

Mussolini was impressed with Bose's belief in a revolutionary way: 'Then indeed you have a chance.' But he advised, 'You must immediately prepare a plan for such a revolution and you must work continuously for its realisation.' Bose would take this advice to heart and repeat it to friends later.

The success of the Rome conference confirmed the India Office's worst fears. It warned the Foreign Office of other attempts by Bose to 'impose' on those 'ignorant of his record', prepared a note for them describing him as an 'implacable foe' and warned foreign

intelligence and police officials to watch out for him.

In the first half of 1934 Subhas visited Munich and returned to Prague, Berlin and Rome. Then, in early summer, accompanied by Nilima, he left on a tour of the Balkans; in little over a month he visited five Balkan cities, four of them capitals. But when he reached Belgrade, the India Office's luck turned. Soon after his arrival the prestigious Belgrade paper *Politika* interviewed him and agreed to publish an article stating the nationalist cause. But later *Politika* rang Bose to say the interview had been held up by the Foreign Office. Some time afterwards Reuter spread the story that the state censor had killed the story, implying that Bose had offended the Yugoslavs. The interview was never published. The truth was that the India Office's strategy had at last worked. As D.J. Gowan, His Majesty's Minister in Belgrade, reported to London:

> On hearing that Bose had arrived I took an opportunity of mentioning his history to the Political Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the result that the press were instructed to confine their reports to the mere fact of his presence in Belgrade. I understand that Bose left Yugoslavia bitterly disappointed at the lack of publicity given to his visit.

From Belgrade Bose moved to Sofia. Close co-operation between the British and the Greeks had already scotched his plans to visit Athens, and in Sofia Bose was closely shadowed by the Bulgarian police.

> He visited all the tombs, monuments, etc., erected in memory of revolutionaries. At two of them in Sofia he spoke for 20 minutes to half an hour. He had endeavoured to recruit 5,000 reserve officers who have fought in wars and who are prepared to follow revolutionary tactics. He took away with him boxes full of communist literature in Bulgarian, French and German. He stated publicly that Gandhi will die soon and that he is the one who will take his place. India is ready for a revolution but perhaps a year or two must elapse. India has 400 million souls of which 10 million can be slaughtered during the struggle for the liberation of India from the yoke of British rule.

He returned to Vienna in mid-June and, for the first time since he had arrived in Europe, settled down into something like home life. He acquired a flat in a quiet suburb and began concentrating on what was to be his major work for the next year. Lawrence (now Lawrence & Wishart), a London publishing firm, had advanced him fifty pounds to write a book about his political experiences, which would in effect be a history of Indian politics since Gandhi had begun his non-co-operation movement. He hired a secretary, and every day dictated and wrote for three to four hours. For much of that summer and early autumn he worked hard. But on 26 November 1934 he received a cable from Prabhavati informing him that Jankinath was seriously ill. He had suffered a heart attack a month before, and now the doctors had begun to despair.

Subhas booked himself a seat on a KLM flight from Rome that would take four days with night stopovers to reach Calcutta, sat up all night correcting proofs and departed for Rome on the morning of the 29th. Despite his problems with the India Office he had no fears about being allowed back into India.

But the Raj saw things less simply. The prospect of a Bose return had long exercised the various departments of the governments in Delhi and Calcutta. Before Bose had been allowed to leave India in March 1933 the Bengal government had advised Delhi to warn him that he would be arrested if he returned. But Delhi had not done so – either because of bureaucratic bungling or through fear that if he had known he was going to be made a permanent exile he would not have gone at all. To complete the confusion, the government of India was not even sure whether his passport carried the all-important endorsement, 'Valid for re-entry into India'.

The U.P. government, which had actually granted the passport, was certain it did not, Delhi was divided, and the India Office was quite sure it did.

During the familiar fierce intra-governmental debate, Bengal had insisted:

> He has maintained touch throughout the period with terrorists in Bengal and secret information shows that he is working steadily towards his declared intention of a mass revolution. Ground at present moment is favourable for his plan. He will come back as

> long lost leader and will put fresh heart into terrorists, correspondingly discouraging our own servants and, among public generally breaking that confidence in government's determination to crush terrorism which has been slowly extending, but even now is far from universal.

Bengal won the argument, and Delhi issued a warrant for Subhas' detention at Presidency Jail or some other suitable place in Calcutta. The Sunday before Subhas arrived Jankinath Bose died. Subhas heard the news of his father's death as he landed at Karachi. His grief was compounded by the customs' seizing proofs of his book. When he landed at Calcutta the same afternoon he learnt about the Bengal government's decision.

The government of Bengal had originally decided to arrest him and take him straight from the airport to Presidency Jail. But hints of this action had been aired in the press, and the government was worried by the possible reaction. It decided to confine him at 38/2 Elgin Road for seven days, visitors being allowed in only with government approval. After that he would be given a simple choice: to fly back to Europe on the next plane or to be arrested. Bose, anxious to be home, agreed, and indicated that he planned to return to Vienna for his operation.

But things were not that straightforward. There was the matter, still unresolved, of what exactly was wrong with his health and he wanted to consult doctors in India before agreeing to an operation recommended by those in Vienna. Also, his finances needed straightening out. With Sarat in his third year of captivity, the family had been deprived of its principal breadwinner and Subhas of an ever-willing Santa Claus. Lawrence and Wishart's fifty pounds had long gone, and Subhas needed to make sure that the friends and well-wishers who had arranged for finances in 1933 would still support him. Most importantly, he now realised that the government wanted to exile him permanently. He had rejected this in 1927 and was reluctant to accept it now. So, when the seven days were over, he wrote to the government for permission to have his visit extended till all the complicated Hindu funeral ceremonies were over (the normal period of mourning is twenty-one days).

The government of Bengal decided to set up a medical board to examine his case, and Delhi once again started on the long search for

a suitable jail. But the doctors solved the problem by recommending Europe; and on Thursday 11 January 1934 Subhas Bose again sailed from Bombay for Europe. In contrast to his earlier journey, he was allowed to bid farewell to his friends and even meet the press.

Three days before his thirty-eighth birthday, on 20 January 1935, Bose arrived in Naples, where a surprise birthday package awaited him. *The Indian Struggle 1920–34* had been published in mid-December, and an old friend in London had sent him some copies. Bose had at one stage despaired of ever seeing the book in print: it has been beset with problems. However, it was now well received by the English and European press. Bose hurried to Rome to present a copy personally to Mussolini.

The book was, of course, banned in India. In it Bose declared:

> The logic of history will . . . follow its inevitable course. The political struggle and the social struggle will have to be conducted simultaneously. The party that will win political freedom for India will also be the party that will win social and economic freedom for the masses.

Continuing with this analysis, one which bore unmistakable traces of Marxist influence, Bose now set out the programme for Samyavadi Sangha. The party would be for the peasants and workers, and emphasise a strong federal government, economic planning, industrialisation, regeneration of village industries and abolition of social differentiation. It would be anti-landlord and opposed to pussy-footing 'mid-Victorian' parliamentary democracy.

Above all, Samyavadi Sangha, living out the ancient Buddhist lineage of its name ('samya' means synthesis), would attempt a new synthesis. India had accomplished that with her numerous conquerors and the varied cultures they had brought with them. She would now do it with the two warring ideologies that were fighting for the soul of Europe: fascism and communism.

> In spite of the antithesis between communism and fascism there are certain traits common to both. Both communism and fascism believe in the supremacy of the state over the individual. Both denounce parliamentarian democracy. Both believe in party rule.

> Both believe in the dictatorship of the party and in the ruthless suppression of dissenting minorities. Both believe in a planned industrial reorganisation of the country. These common traits will form the basis of the new synthesis. That synthesis is called by the writer Samyavada – an Indian word which means literally 'the doctrine of synthesis or equality'. It will be India's task to work out this synthesis.

Subhas Bose had arrived at an important watershed in his life. His criticisms of Gandhi, also enumerated in the book, would make him life-long enemies among the Gandhians; his belief in an Indian world role through synthesis has provoked many accusations of naïvety and fascism. Let us examine the latter – the remarkable doctrine that he would occasionally modify but never abandon. For the next eleven years it would form the basis of his political belief, and nine months before his death he would re-state it to students at Tokyo University. For both the friends and enemies of Subhas Bose, it is the acid test. It is his great contribution to the fundamental problem of Indian revolution; it is the conclusive charge-sheet against him.

Subhas Bose was no fascist, nor unaware of what made Nazism tick. At the Bombay press conference on the eve of his departure in 1935, he was asked about his admiration for Hitler. He replied:

> It is entirely news to me. However, there is much in his organisation worth studying. But as far as his principles are concerned, I do not see how they can appeal to India. On the economic side he is more or less in the hands of big capitalists and politically he is pro-British. My general attitude towards European politics is that we should study closely all the latest developments, but at the same time I firmly believe that India should evolve her own systems in the light of her tradition and national requirements. I earnestly deplore the tendency to reproduce in India the fascist and communist systems blindly.

Later still he admitted he may have been wrong in equating fascism and communism. In November 1937, interviewed by R.P. Dutt and Ben Bradley, he said:

> What I really meant was that we in India wanted our national freedom and having won it, we wanted to move in the direction of socialism. . . . I should like to point out that when I was writing the book, fascism had not started on its imperialistic expedition, and it appeared to me merely as an aggressive form of nationalism. I should also point out that communism as it appeared to be demonstrated by many of those who were supposed to stand for it in India seemed to me to be anti-national, and this impression was further strengthened in view of the hostile attitude which several among them exhibited towards the Indian National Congress.

At Tokyo University in 1944 he would state:

> You cannot have a so-called democratic system, if that system has to put through economic reforms on a socialistic basis. Therefore, we must have a political system – a state – of an authoritarian character. . . . To repeat once again, our political philosophy should be a synthesis between National Socialism and communism. The conflict between thesis and antithesis has to be resolved in a higher synthesis. This is what the Law of Dialectic demands. If this is not done, then human progress will come to an end. India will, therefore, try to move on to the next stage of political and social evolution.

Bose's eclecticism had finally produced this absurd theory.

Subhas recognised that there was no theory of thought or belief behind fascism, no philosophy that gave it sustenance. What attracted him were its organisational methods. He was clearly fascinated by the role the party played in the Italian state.

> The party take charge of every individual in the state regardless of age or sex. No individual is isolated from the state, and it is the function of the party to train citizens for the state.

Bose believed, unlike Gandhi, that the party of freedom must be the party of reconstruction, and he was eager to look at all possible models. The philosophy must be Indian but the methods could be borrowed from anywhere, however tainted their sources might be.

While he admired Marx's vision of the world and Lenin's thesis on nationalism and communism, he could not reconcile himself to certain features of the latter. As he asserted in *The Indian Struggle* and repeated to the Tokyo students, communism was not sufficiently in tune with nationalism; Russia was not interested in a world revolution, and Marxism merely stressed the materialistic aspects of life. It was profoundly anti-religious and atheistic, whereas in India there was no feeling against religion and: 'A national awakening is in most cases heralded by a religious reform, a cultural renaissance.'

He rejected Nehru's clear and unambiguous choice in favour of communism because that would mean: 'We are at the end of the process of evolution . . . there is no reason to hold that our choice is restricted to two alternatives.' To accept Nehru would be to limit India's role: evolution was the law of nature, and synthesis was the great Indian gift. The idea is best summed up in the London speech he was not allowed to read:

> India will be called upon to play an important role in world history in the near future. We all know that in the seventeenth century England made a remarkable contribution to world civilisation through her ideas of constitutional and democratic government. Similarly, in the eighteenth century, France made the most wonderful contribution to the culture of the world through her ideas of 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. During the nineteenth century Germany made the most remarkable gift through her Marxian philosophy. During the twentieth century Russia has enriched the culture and civilisation of the world through her achievements in proletarian revolution, proletarian government and proletarian culture. The next remarkable contribution to the culture and civilisation of the world, India will be called upon to make.

It was this belief that drove him forward, that he repeated in one form or another in all his speeches and writings, and that finally made him find a synthesis where there was none.

Bose remained in Europe for another sixteen months, working, studying and travelling. It was a time for consolidating the work he had already done. On 24 April 1935, too, his much-postponed

operation took place, and his gall-bladder 'with a big stone inside' was removed. Even his doubtful financial situation improved, with the release of Sarat on 26 July 1935. Sarat quickly re-established his considerable practice at the Bar, and was soon leading the Congress in Bengal.

Subhas, apart from concentrating on his writing, was organising a trip to Ireland. For radical Indians, particularly Bengalis, Ireland was a magic country. It had done the impossible – proved that even the mighty British Empire was vulnerable. Indians had devoured Irish history, and the lives of Irish heroes had through endless re-telling acquired the status of ancient Hindu myths. Bose himself could recall the tremendous enthusiasm when Terence McSwiney's family sent a message of condolence on Jatin Das' death. He had been planning to go to Ireland for a long time. In 1934 the Irish Free State legation at Berlin had granted him a visa. But Bose had then still been hoping to visit England, and he was convinced that a visit to Ireland would spoil his chances. Now this constraint had vanished, he applied for a visa. After some initial difficulty, Bose sailed for Cork, arriving on 1 February 1936. At Dublin Indian students met him and an Indian girl garlanded him. Finally, he was accorded a reception by the Indian–Irish Independence League at which virtually the entire Republican old guard turned up. His ten days in Dublin became a mini-state-visit. He had discussions with the Ministers of Finance, Industry and Commerce, the Minister for Local Government and the Vice-President of the Cabinet. He held talks with the Dublin Trades Council, visited the offices of the *Irish Press*, exchanged views with the leaders of the Sinn Fein and listened to Dail debates from the Strangers' Gallery. The high points of his visit, and events that pleased him immensely, were his three meetings with De Valera.

In our times such visits have become so common as to be unremarkable – those of nationalist leaders to sympathetic countries, where they are fêted by the leaders who receive them. But in 1936 the days of the PLO and the Namibian Liberation Organisation were unimaginable, and Bose's activities created a sensation. He easily dominated the news in both Ireland and India, and inevitably British intelligence kept track on his movements.

The visit to Ireland, perhaps appropriately, also marked the end of his stay in Europe. He had never liked the life of an exile, and the

thought of permanent separation from India was unbearable. He knew that return to India meant prison, perhaps another long spell, but that was infinitely preferable even to Vienna. And now, in February 1936, he had even more reason to return home. Jawaharlal Nehru was going to be the next president of the Congress, and Subhas Bose was determined that the Left should unite behind him to take the Congress with it. At about this time Nehru came to Europe to be with his dying wife, and Bose quickly renewed contact. When Kamala Nehru had arrived in Vienna in June 1935, Bose had helped in making arrangements. As she lay dying he hurried to her bedside, and later helped Nehru in arranging for her cremation.

Jawaharlal, despite past differences, was like an older brother, and these European meetings marked the start of a short honeymoon between the two men. Bose was keen that Nehru should not miss the chance of turning the Congress definitely leftwards. He was aware of Nehru's vacillation when faced with Gandhi, and in private discussions and letters tried to build up his confidence and urge him to lead the Left.

Bose wanted to be in India for the Lucknow Congress in April 1936. He rounded off his programme in Europe, which included an address to the French section of the League Against Imperialism. This included significant passages on the need for a worldwide anti-imperialist front. Subhas had watched with dismay the rape of Abyssinia and the continuing Japanese aggression against China.

> It is necessary for us to think of the means of preventing the growth of Japanese imperialism in Asia. If tomorrow China could be strong and unified; if tomorrow India could be free, I am sure it would influence the balance of power in Asia and serve to check the spread of Japanese imperialism.

The Bengal government, meanwhile, was worried that Bose, who had bought a return ticket, might come back at any moment and catch them unawares. One of the Delhi officials calmed these fears:

> My opinion is that it is extremely unlikely that Subhas Chandra Bose will attempt to come to India like a thief in the night. He

thrives almost entirely on publicity and will, in my opinion, continue to do so.

The Bengal government did, however, persuade Delhi to get the India Office to issue a warning. This was a remarkable testimony to Bose's power. 1936 was a great year of peace. The Congress was inching towards accepting ministries in the provinces, and had decided to contest elections under the new Government of India Act of 1935. For the first time in many years nearly all its prominent leaders were sleeping in their own homes. In Bengal Sarat Bose had been released and the government had declared that terrorism was licked. But Subhas was different.

On 27 March 1936 he sailed on S.S. *Count Verde* for Bombay. As the ship arrived at Port Said, police officers came aboard, seized his passport and mounted a guard on him. Only as the *Count Verde* was about to sail were these measures withdrawn; and as soon as he docked at Bombay he was whisked off to jail. He just had time to send a message to the Congress session: 'Keep the flag of freedom flying.' He knew the present struggle would be more intensive, but he was now also more hopeful about the result.

Europe had taught him much, and he hoped he had left a little of India behind. But he was worried about certain things. Two days before his departure he had written:

> When I first visited Germany in 1933, I had hopes that the new German nation which had risen to consciousness of its national strength and self-respect, would instinctively feel a deep sympathy for other nations struggling in the same direction. Today I regret that I have to return to India with the conviction that the new nationalism of Germany is not only narrow and selfish but arrogant. . . . The new racial philosophy which has a very weak scientific foundation, stands for the glorification of the white races in general, and the German race in particular.

There was goodwill for India among older Germans, but he could not believe Nazi Germany and India could ever be friends.

PART IV

THE EMBATTLED LEADER

Your eyes are filled with tender light
For those whose eyes are dimmed with tears
They see your brow is crowned and bright
But not its ring of wounding spears

George Russell
(one of Bose's favourite poets)

11

INTERLUDE

1936 promised elections to be held under the much-trumpeted Government of India Act, 1935. This was the new 'charter of liberty', enacted after an eight-year pregnancy through the Simon Commission, through round-table conferences and innumerable debates in Parliament, and it was Dyarchy by more sophisticated means. As R.J. Moore says, 'It aimed at the representation of interest, not of numbers.' All the likely collaborator groups were catered for; upper-class Muslims, dependable Hindus, other minorities, and princes. Existing separate electoral arrangements for Hindus, Muslims and other minorities were further strengthened; the provinces were given more power, but the British governors held wide reserve powers – and, though a federal centre was created, it was left weak and ineffectual, its very existence subject to the agreement of the princes. (Encouraged by Churchill and the Conservative Right, the princes refused to agree to this part of the act and it was never implemented.)

On the larger questions of national independence and freedom the 1935 act provided the same answers as ever: India was still the pocket borough of the Secretary of State and would be run from the well-fortified Whitehall corridors of the India Office. The act remains one of history's most sophisticated attempts by an occupying power to perpetuate its alien rule yet not appear to do so. In the end it failed, as it was bound to; but it is a reflection of the strength of imperialist propaganda that, even today, the historians of the Raj

can see it as the crowning glory of the wonder that was the British Empire.

Subhas Bose, like all other Left nationalists, had no illusions about it. He had condemned the White Paper as soon as it was issued, and he was convinced that the Congress would have to fight the act in every possible way. The only question was how. Although total opposition was theoretically the easiest way, it was not necessarily the best. In fact, it could turn out to be dangerous. It would leave the British free to organise collaborators to win the election and prove that Indians did support the Raj. So Bose wanted the Congress to contest the elections, then reject the act.

It was this that the government feared, though their public justification for Bose's continued arrest (when all the other prominent leaders were free) was his connection with revolutionary violence. They stuck to this line despite considerable public protest which included a one-day country-wide *hartal*, launched on 20 May 1936, to secure his release. However, when Bose once again fell ill, he was transferred and kept under the 'relaxed' detention laws that had restricted Sarat. Though Subhas never formally accepted the humiliating conditions, he did not violate them, preferring to get reacquainted with his family after nearly four years in jail and exile, and to assimilate the European experience.

Through the summer and autumn of 1936 public protest about Bose's detention continued. There were more motions in the Delhi assembly, angry demands by Nehru and others, questions in the House of Commons; but the government always gave the same answer – that he was a man of great ability, but dedicated towards revolutionary violence, and imprisoned for that reason. When, in December, his intestinal troubles flared up again, he was brought down to Calcutta and admitted to the medical college hospital. With the elections just a month away, the government had successfully prevented Bose from organising the Congress during a crucial period; now even the Bengal government could afford to accommodate him. He was allotted a separate cabin, a special day bearer was appointed, extra diet was sanctioned and he was thoroughly examined and X-rayed. When he was a little better relatives were allowed to visit him, and later still he was driven every afternoon under police escort to spend a few hours with Prabhavati at 38/2 Elgin Road.

But the government still had no intention of letting him go – there were far too many imponderables on the political scene. The question was what the Congress would do if it won the elections. The debate within the Congress about whether or not to accept office had reached the crucial stage. Though the session held on 27–8 December 1936 had re-affirmed the Congress' determination to wreck the act, it was not clear whether the Congress would accept office in the provinces.

A free Bose would strengthen the Left and complicate matters endlessly. So, while the government waited for the election results, it decided that once Bose was better he would be interned. On 10 February 1937 the Home Department sent the Bengal government the necessary warrant. Meanwhile the legal experts discovered that the previous 'relaxed' detention had been technically illegal; and by the time they had solved the puzzle, wider political events had made Bose's detention impossible.

The election results showed sweeping Congress victories: the party had won 716 seats out of 1161 contested (of a total of 1585), and clear majorities in six provinces. In Bengal it had obtained more seats than any other party; but the Bengal government could feel satisfied that its friends – the Muslim League, the Europeans, the independent scheduled caste groups and the Hindu upper-caste clans – had sufficient strength to preserve a suitably collaborationist government.

On the wider, all-India scale the Congress was definitely moving towards acceptance of office. The Congress Right, and the careerists who had suffered so long, were determined not to miss out on this, the most significant prize awarded by the Raj. While the Left, led by Nehru, were long on rhetoric, the Right, ably marshalled by the Brahmanical skills of Rajagopalachari, manoeuvred the party into office acceptance at the crucial Working Committee session in Delhi on 16 March 1937.

On the afternoon of 17 March, while Subhas sat talking to Prabhavati in the front room of the Elgin Road house, a deputy commissioner of police walked in with a letter informing him that the order first imposed on the night of 2 January 1932, had at last been cancelled. For the first time in nearly six years Subhas Bose was a free man in India.

He moved back to his spacious and airy first-floor rooms at 38/2

Elgin Road and almost immediately rang Dilip. Later Dilip described the moment of reunion:

> I was shocked to see how much he had thinned away. But he looked more spiritual than ever in spite of the rings of shadows under his keen eyes. He threw his arms round me and wept like a child.

As the pair resumed their debates about life, yoga and Nirvana – sitting side by side either in Elgin Road or on the verandah of Sarat's Woodburn Park house, occasionally holding hands, and ribbing each other – Dilip realised that Subhas had indeed changed. Prison had mellowed him, made him a softer, gentler person. It had forced him back on his own resources and made him realise the virtues of humility and resignation. He was no longer the flamboyant young man quitting the ICS in a single sweeping gesture: he needed friends and help. 'Only do stay with us for a while,' he pleaded with Dilip when he heard of Dilip's plans to return to Aurobindo. 'Don't revert too soon to your shell. You may not need us but we need you.' Subhas, Dilip thought, would now try and learn to love his enemies – though with one enemy there could be no compromise, no retreat to *ashrams* and gurus. There the fight would be all the fiercer: prison had softened him but it had not defeated him.

Bose was, of course, not fit enough to resume active political work, and he spent much of the summer of 1937 recovering. After a month in Calcutta, he went to stay with the Dharmavirs in Dalhousie, one of the many minor hill stations created by the Raj. Well looked after by Mrs Dharmavir, Bose began to reflect on the European scene. He thought that war might come through German miscalculation, as in 1914, when Germany had not believed that Britain would fight; and, both privately and publicly, he agonised about Japan's action against China. At about this time he also began writing his autobiography, or at least jotting down notes for what he provisionally called *Pages From My Life*. The British CID intercepted a few pages of this, but unfortunately the file containing the intercepts has not been preserved.

Bose returned to Calcutta in early October. He was not yet fully fit, but there was much to do, and suddenly he was given an exciting new job. With an A.I.C.C. session due at the end of that

month in Calcutta, he had to be back in the plains. This session – the first Bose was attending in nearly six years – marked the beginning of a rapprochement between Gandhi and Bose. Gandhi and his considerable retinue were Sarat's guests; Working Committee meetings were held there, Gandhi agreed with Subhas and Sarat that something ought to be done about the release of the terrorists (of whom most had renounced the gun and many had taken to Marxism); and he finally decided that Subhas Bose should succeed Nehru as president of the Congress.

It is still not clear exactly how the decision was reached. Congress presidents were in theory elected by the members of the All-India Congress Committee; in practice they had been chosen, since the 1920s, by Gandhi in his role as the Congress 'Permanent President' (to borrow Nehru's phrase). Whoever he picked was automatically appointed. Bose had written from Dalhousie on 9 September that he was going to be the next president, which must mean he had received the nod from Gandhi. Yet on 1 October Gandhi wrote to Nehru indicating that Pattabhi Sitaramayya was his choice.

Nehru's reply – if indeed he made a formal one – has not been preserved, and we are faced with two questions. How could Bose have been so sure on 9 September? And what made Gandhi change his mind between 1 October and the Calcutta A.I.C.C. meeting? J.B. Kripalani, Congress general secretary at that time and a close confidant of Gandhi, has suggested one possible answer at least to the second question. According to him, when Gandhi met Bose during the A.I.C.C. session, Bose had told him that he wanted to become Congress president; but

> Gandhi told him that as he was unwell and had just come out of jail and was not in touch with the political affairs of the country he should wait for a year and recoup his health before he took up the strenuous work of the president of the Congress. To this Subhas Babu replied that he had been quite in touch with the affairs of the country even during his imprisonment and that if he were made president of the Congress his health would improve and he would become normal. Gandhi then told him that if he insisted he would support his candidature.

Kripalani's testimony, however, must be treated with care. He

was a bitter, vituperative critic of Bose, seeing him as one of the pack that followed Gandhi. More likely, Gandhi had decided that it was time to chain the rebel with responsibility and the irresistible attractions of power. It had worked wonderfully with Nehru. It had provided the Left with a figurehead president of its own, effectively hobbling it. Nehru had been president for two successive terms, in 1936 and 1937, just when the Left was coming to the boil, and he could not – would not – advance the cause of the Left. The Left, by the same token, could not wholeheartedly attack the Congress establishment while their man was president.

Besides, Bose was now an immense public figure, his hold over the young matched, if not excelled, that of Nehru and his reputation as a leader of the Left nationalists was secure. Gandhi had carefully monitored his progress and noticed the growth of his influence among the peasants. The Congress' rural strength lay among sections of the landed aristocracy, who actively resented the growth of middle- and lower-class peasant movements. These were particularly strong in Bihar and Andhra, and the peasant leaders from these provinces, Swami Sahajananda and Ranga, looked to Bose for encouragement and support. Ranga, who found Nehru cold and austere, believes that during his tours of the country he discovered Bose's strength and urged Gandhi to give Bose a try. All this was helped by the prevailing political circumstances. Now that revolutionary violence was at an end, Gandhi, who believed in the British portrayal of Bose as a revolutionary leader, could sleep easy on that score; only mass movements, either of the Gandhi type or some other, were viable.

Bose, of course, went some way towards meeting Gandhi. On his way to Dalhousie he had met Gandhi in Allahabad and lovingly embraced him; on Gandhi's birthday he declared that 'non-violence has now permeated even those sections who were once immune to it' and that everyone should 'intensify their campaign to favour non-violence'.

Still not fit enough for his arduous year as president, Bose decided on a trip to Europe. He flew there on 18 November, the day after Gandhi had left. As soon as he had settled down he began converting *Pages From My Life* into a proper autobiography. In ten hectic days he took his story, which he called *An Indian Pilgrim*, from his birth in Cuttack to resignation from the ICS in 1921. He planned to take it

right through his political years and write three concluding chapters on his faith – one philosophical, one political and one economic. But he never did finish his writing pilgrimage; he had time to write only one chapter about his faith – the philosophical one.

When he arrived in London a few weeks later he showed the manuscript to Frederick Warburg of Secker & Warburg. Warburg was interested in Bose's life and aware of his developing rivalry with Nehru. He had read Nehru's autobiography and been immensely impressed; the book had also been something of a commercial success, and Warburg thought a book by Bose might make a good proposition. But *An Indian Pilgrim* disappointed him. It was only about 40,000 words long, incomplete, not as well written as Nehru's book and altogether somewhat insubstantial. So Secker & Warburg decided not to publish, and the book was first brought out, years after Bose's death, by his admirers in India.

The book, in fact, is not quite as bad as Warburg made it out to be. True, it did not have Nehru's literary skill and ambivalent charm, but it is a characteristic piece of Bose's work: clear and without any of the mystical, ambiguous flourishes that often cloud Indian writing. It is not quite as cogent as *The Indian Struggle*, and at times it is reticent. But it is a pleasing account of an Indian, steeped in Hinduism, struggling to come to terms with the West, and it contrasted favourably with Gandhi's obsessional concern about health, bowels and food.

Even on this short trip Bose was still spied on almost constantly. However, when he wrote to the Secretary of State, the Marquis of Zetland, for permission to visit England, he received a favourable response. (Bose was under the impression that he required a formal endorsement to visit England. In fact, as we know, all he had to do was to arrive. But Zetland was keen that the fiction should be preserved, and he got the Foreign Offfice to telegraph British consuls in Austria to provide Bose with a further unnecessary endorsement on his passport for the U.K. – but not 'a general British Empire endorsement'. Bose was still too dangerous to be permitted to wander everywhere.)

On the evening of 19 January 1938 Bose finally arrived at London's Victoria station. It was eighteen years since his first visit, and his second was also to be his last. This is an important point: in the U.K., Subhas Bose was the least-known of the leading Indian

politicians. Gandhi and his brilliantly eccentric ideas had made him a legend; Nehru had close and intimate links with the British Left; only Stafford Cripps knew Bose at all well, and he evidently did not like him. In Christmas 1937 Bose tried to make good this deficiency. At Victoria hundreds of Indians had gathered to receive him with garlands and slogans. He addressed Indian students, was given a public reception attended by a galaxy of Labour leaders at Conway Hall, and met Arthur Greenwood, Ernest Bevin, Stafford Cripps, Harold Laski, Clement Attlee, Herbert Anderson of the influential Conciliation Group, Agatha Harrison (a Quaker friend of Gandhi) and Harry Pollitt of the British Communist Party. Everybody, as the *Manchester Guardian* later observed, was 'impressed by his pleasant, quiet manner' and the 'decisiveness with which he discussed Indian affairs'.

He also met Lord Zetland. Bose at first had not been keen to do so, but English friends had insisted. Finally they met for an hour and a half at Lord Halifax's Eaton Square residence on a cold January morning, and had what Zetland later described as an interview 'of a very friendly character throughout'. But, though Zetland was taken by Bose's 'charming smile', the gap between the two men was wide: Bose could not agree that the 1935 act was anything other than a sop.

Two other encounters probably meant more to him: a midnight meeting with Eamon De Valera at a London hotel, and a rather curious one with Pamela de Bouvey, wife of Frederick Warburg. She had met Subhas at Conway Hall and made an immediate impression on him by saying: 'I hear you do not like women. That is dreadful.' As soon as the meeting was over, Subhas, Frederick Warburg and Pamela stole away to the Warburgs' London flat, and there Subhas vigorously defended himself against the charge of being a misogynist. Suddenly, to Pamela's great surprise, he said: 'Come with me to India. I will put you in charge of the women's section. You can organise our women.' Attractive as the idea was, Pamela could not abandon a home and a husband in England to journey to India, though she agreed to think about it. Subhas followed this up, on his return to India, with a three-page letter imploring her to come to India: she would be his guest and he would look after her. Nothing came of it, though to her dying day Pamela was convinced this was a declaration from Subhas' heart.

Subhas returned to India on 23 January 1937, and resumed his role as the monastic nationalist. Within a few weeks he was to become Congress president. At Karachi airport he brushed aside questions about marriage. Pamela – whatever the condition of his heart – was never mentioned, and the two never met again.

12

RASHTRAPATI

The Congress session, held at Haripura, was a celebration – the first annual conference since the Congress had come to power in the provinces. Bose, who had journeyed there from Calcutta in a second-class compartment decorated with national flags, accompanied by a large group of friends and relatives and a Hindi tutor to improve his shaky grasp of the language, received a flamboyant welcome.

It was the fifty-first session, and there were fifty-one gates, fifty-one national flags, fifty-one national songs and fifty-one white bullocks. Girls in saffron sarees (it is not clear whether there were fifty-one of them) escorted Bose to the president's tent. Almost overnight Haripura – a tiny Gujerat village on the banks of the river Tapti – had become a town, with temporary roads, electricity, its own dairy, special water-works and a kitchen that catered for 100,000 people. The Ford Motor Company, realising the power of the newly installed ministers, had provided new V-8 cars for the use of the leaders. There could be no better evidence that the Congress Raj was on its way.

The high point of any Congress session was the presidential address. These were often long on rhetoric but short on substance. Bose's long speech was characteristic of the man: full of matter-of-fact advice and arguments in favour of an independent India that would be a socialist state dedicated to removing the age-old ills of its people: hunger, illiteracy and disease. His trip to England and discussions with the British Left had made an impact, and he was

keen to emphasise the links between colonial liberation movements and the socialist struggle in Britain. Swaraj itself was a means to the long-sought goal of a reconstructed India. In order to achieve that, a party would be required, and that could only be a post-independence Congress. It would have plenty to do. Population would have to be curbed, agriculture radically reformed, landlordism abolished, agricultural indebtedness liquidated, credit made freely available, co-operatives organised; above all there would have to be planning – socialist planning and control. Gandhian village industries were fine, but there could be no going back to the pre-industrial age.

Bose's down-to-earth approach is best illustrated in his suggested answer to an old problem that had often dogged the Indian nationalists, and still continues to divide India: what should be the common language of a country so vast and diverse. English, for obvious reasons, was out. The Congress had adopted Hindi, but there had been controversy between those who wanted a Sanskritised Hindi, drawing on Hindu sources, and those who preferred Hindustani, which accommodated Urdu with its Muslim connections. The controversy embraced the script. Sanskritised Hindi was in the Devanagari script; Urdu in the Arabic. Bose had a radical, and altogether more practical, solution: Hindi in the Roman script. The Congress did nothing about it, but Bose introduced it later in his Indian National Army with great success.

Bose's year as president was marked by fierce opposition from Patel, by suspicion – turning to hostility – from Gandhi, and by vacillation from Nehru. But Bose had a job to do. There was, for instance, the need to give concrete shape to the many socialist resolutions the Congress had passed. This, Bose was convinced, could not be done without state planning. During his mammoth Haripura presidential address he had sketched out his ideas for a centralised planning commission, on whose advice the state 'will have to adopt a comprehensive scheme for gradually socialising our entire agricultural and industrial system in the spheres of both production and appropriation'.

Planning was just the sort of practical thing Bose loved to get his teeth into, and a fair bit of his presidential year was spent in setting up a Congress planning committee. In May 1938 he called a conference of Congress Chief Ministers in Bombay and got them to

donate 50,000 rupees and endorse his ideas. On Gandhi's birthday in October 1938 he presided over a conference of Congress ministers of industry at Delhi, and repeated his practical vision of planning. On 17 October he inaugurated the committee in Bombay. He had secured the services of prominent scientists like Dr Meghnad Saha; Hari Vishnu Kamath, a man whom Bose had encouraged to resign from the ICS and join the freedom struggle, was named the secretary, and Nehru was made its chairman. The choice seemed ideal; Nehru had spoken eloquently of socialism and was the one prominent leader committed to planning. But some friends and relations had doubts. Nehru was a rival, and this situation, though created by Bose, would give the impression that it was Nehru who had led the way. Bose, according to a nephew who worked closely with him, retorted, 'This will expose him.' The anecdote needs to be treated with care, but certainly Bose's choice was generous rather than shrewd.

Nehru was not interested in details. His forte was the visionary, often romantic view of the socialist glory to come, and he was worried about frightening the middle classes. The result was a disaster. Soon there were public recriminations between Kamath and Nehru which led to Kamath's resignation. Nehru's vague and soft-pedalling approach led to a proliferation of committees which got lost among the minutiae of planning and completely forgot the broader view. Bose had visualised something very different: concrete, practical ideas that might have helped the Congress provincial ministers or at least goaded them into doing something. Yet it was Nehru who secured a reputation as the initiator of planning, and Bose's labours were quickly forgotten.

Bose was also aware that the Congress had degenerated into a flabby electoral machine whose supporters, as one report put it, 'have no other work throughout the year except that of keeping an eye on their seat on the Congress Body.' Mass consciousness had come – crowds of 50–100,000 were common at political meetings – but the Congress did not have the 'well disciplined volunteer corps' to take advantage of it. Bose's offer to remedy this state of affairs was frustrated by the facts that the Congress office was permanently located in Allahabad, 700 miles from Calcutta, and that the Congress secretary was Bose's critic Kripalani. With Kripalani keen to maintain his authority, the changes necessary to remove the

Congress from its increasingly careerist mould could never take place.

More satisfying for Subhas was his public role as president. The president was a symbol, the man who carried the flag and took it to various parts of the country, reassuring the faithful, arousing the sceptics and gathering in the uninitiated. Such meetings were the very life-blood of the mass politician. Throughout 1938 Bose toured the country. He had been doing so for more than ten years, but now the crowds were bigger – often 100,000, sometimes as much as a million; special arrangements had to be made for his train compartments, and organisers struggled to hold back the crowds at railway stations and roadsides. Everywhere he went the routine was the same: the welcome at the station, the garlands, the speeches, the motorcade through the city or the village and the progress, through improvised ranks of Congressmen affecting a military pose with often farcical effect, to the meeting-hall. Here still more garlands, more welcoming speeches, more references to Desh-ki-Neta (the Leader of the Nation) and cries of 'Bengal kesari ki jai' ('Long live the Bengal hero') and 'Subhas Babu zindabad' ('Long live Subhas Babu'); and finally the embarrassing 'thank you' speeches of the organisers.

It had not always been like this, and it would not be so in the future, but for the moment he was king, and there was something about him that was irresistible. Soli Batlivala recalls a tour to Karnataka during this period. Subhas and Jawaharlal sat in the back of the car on either side of Kamala Devi Chattopodhay, an attractive socialist feminist; Soli rode with the driver in front. For hour after hour and mile after mile they passed through the Karnataka countryside, and through every village endured the ritual of greetings from a large crowd, of garlands, speeches and requests for *darshan* (that wonderful Indian word summing up the need for favour and patronage). Soon Nehru was tired; as the trip progressed, his head began to recline against Kamala Devi's comfortable shoulder, and for the village *darshan*-seekers there was only a tired and scornful wave of his hand. Subhas, on the other hand, remained upright and erect, kept his arms and hands free of Kamala Devi, and willingly – almost happily – submitted himself to this political mechanism. Even allowing for Batlivala's hero-worshipping gloss, the anecdote has the ring of truth. The *rashtrapati* (president) in public had to be

untiring, completely dedicated and totally uncorruptible by wine, women or song. It was a hard pose to keep up, but in public Bose always managed to sustain it.

However, despite this outward calm and the superficial ease with which Bose worked the Gandhi machine, there were considerable strains.

The issue on which Bose and Gandhi nearly parted was that of the Bengal ministry. Bengal was ruled by a coalition between the Krishak Praja Party (a strong regional party with a fine-sounding radical programme) and the Muslim League. Bose was desperately anxious to prevent an 'office mentality' taking over the Congress, and therefore to keep the party organisation in good order – ready for renewed *satyagraha* in 1939 – and exploit every opportunity afforded by provincial power. To this end he wanted, by arranging a suitable resignation, to topple the Bengal government, break up the coalition and bring the Krishak Praja Party into alliance with the Congress instead.

By the end of 1938 Bose thought he had convinced Gandhi of the wisdom of this plan – only to have Gandhi ultimately reject it, saying, 'I feel . . . that the best way of securing comparative purity of administration and a continuity of a settled programme and policy would be to aim at having all the reforms that we desire, carried out by the present ministry.' Bose was dismayed by this apparent change of mind, telling Gandhi that he was taking other counsel in preference to his own local party chiefs, and threatened to resign unless the decision was changed.

Bose has been charged with opportunism over the affair. Certainly his arguments for the alliance were contradictory, and contrasted sharply with the position of Nehru, who steadfastly opposed all such partnerships with non-Congress elements. But in the long term Bose was undoubtedly right. As one Indian historian has put it, the Krishak Praja Party's 'merger with the League made the ministry almost wholly communal, and gave communalism a foothold to expand'. In 1937 the Muslim League had been one of the lesser parties in Bengal; in 1947, having been in power for eight of the last ten years, it was the most important – playing a crucial role in ensuring that India was partitioned and Bengal itself divided into a predominantly Hindu West and a Pakistani (now Bangladeshi) East.

Subhas, however, did not carry out his threat. His break with Gandhi took place over a larger question.

The September 1938 session of the A.I.C.C. illustrated the growing tension between the left and right wings of the Congress. Bose had fallen sick on his way to Delhi and had to rush to get there on time. When he arrived he found the Left and Right polarising on the attitudes to be taken in the event of another European war. On behalf of the Right, Rajagopalachari had moved an ambiguous resolution appealing to the good sense of the British to do the right thing by India if a crisis came. The Left were determined to oppose this 'sloppy' resolution, and one leading communist leader working with the Congress, Niharendru Dutt-Mazumdar, moved an amendment. He has a precise recollection of what followed:

> In substance the amendment said, 'the uncompromising struggle of India's liberation should be our cardinal policy and we must not commit the mistake that Mahatma Gandhi had made in the past'. . . . Bose sympathised with us but informed us that the Working Committee would not accept our amendment to Rajaji's resolution. Seventy-three of us walked out of the A.I.C.C. [That night] I, along with P.C. Joshi and Somnath Lahiri (other communist leaders) met Bose. . . . We appreciated that he had sympathised with us and we suggested that this was the moment for a proper polarisation. This was, as far as I can remember, when the idea of Bose standing for a second term was first mooted.

Gandhi was furious about the Left walk-out, and when Mazumdar and the others went to see him he suggested that they should leave the Congress. Immediately afterwards, he wrote that a split might purify the party. Both sides were indeed eager to test their strength, and the presidential election provided the ideal occasion.

It was clear that Gandhi's methods, which had worked so well with Nehru, had failed with Bose. The rebel had not been chained. Bose's suspected links with the Germans may also have turned Gandhi against Bose. Soli Batlivala tells a delightful story of how he was once summoned to meet Bose in a Bombay flat and asked to design a suitable disguise that would enable him to fool the

watching police, and meet some foreign diplomats. Soli, an old theatrical hand and well versed in revolutionary methods of deception, quickly fabricated a good disguise. He thinks Bose used it to meet some Chinese diplomats. Other sources have confirmed Bose's meeting with Nazi party officials – not to hatch plots, it seems, but to denounce Nazi racial policies. Despite the disguise, news about this probably came back to Gandhi, who may have thought that Bose was back on the old Bengali revolutionary-conspiratorial tightrope. Certainly, the government took a keen interest in the developing Bose–Gandhi duel and, in a long, exhaustive analysis of the Congress' finances, concluded that while the big financiers like the Birlas would support Gandhi – as they had traditionally done – Bose had enough 'protection money' from small businessmen to keep going.

Subhas quickly announced his candidature. His election manifesto was simple: he would fight the federation proposed under the 1935 Government of India Act. There had been talk of compromise; this should be scotched. This was the age of 'the progressive sharpening of the anti-imperialist struggle in India', and in this year of destiny the Congress president should be from the Left and genuinely anti-federation. Some of the prominent leftist leaders such as J.P. Narayan supported Bose's cause, and he appeared to have assembled a working coalition. Until the election Bose and his friends held the initiative.

The Gandhians were confused about their tactics. Nehru had taken a long holiday in Europe, gone to Spain and fought fascism with great eloquence. When he had returned from Europe in November 1938 Gandhi had suggested his name, but he declined and recommended Maulana Azad. Azad accepted but withdrew at the last moment, and that left Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the relatively unknown Andhra leader.

Lumbered with an unattractive candidate, the Congress right-wing now tried to seize the initiative. Though Gandhi remained in the background, he authorised a statement which was issued in the name of Patel and certain other Working Committee members, declaring that the choice of president was nearly always unanimous, that in any case the office carried little or no power and that, besides, there were no issues involved: all those concerned were opposed to federation. The implication was obvious – that this was really a

personal fight by Bose, unable to control his dangerous ambition and determined to prove that he, like Nehru, could gain a second successive term. Privately, Patel telegraphed Sarat and told him he felt Subhas' election would be harmful to the country. Bose, nettled, replied that he was standing because there were distinct signs of compromise between the Congress Right and the British over federation. He was still prepared to withdraw if a genuinely socialist and anti-federationist candidate stood.

The election was immediately preceded by a war of press statements in which both sides became entrenched. But, by the time the results were declared on 29 January 1939, Bose had accurately predicted them. He had secured 1,580 votes against Sitaramayya's 1,377 – a narrow but clear majority, and one spread uniformly over the entire country.

The next day Sitaramayya telegraphed 'Hearty contratulations', and wished him 'long years of health and vigour'. Subhas reciprocated – but that was the last bit of brotherly feeling in the Congress, for Gandhi had taken Bose's defeat as a bitter personal blow. Two days after the elections he issued a statement:

> I must confess that from the very beginning I was decidely against his re-election for reasons into which I need not go. I do not subscribe to his facts or the arguments in his manifestos. . . . Nevertheless, I am glad of his victory; and since I was instrumental in inducing Dr Pattabhi not to withdraw his name as a candidate when Maulana Sahib withdrew, the defeat is more mine than his. And I am nothing if I do not represent definite principles and policy. Therefore, it is plain to me that the delegates do not approve of the principles and policy for which I stand. I rejoice in this defeat.

Bose, Gandhi continued, was now a president in his own right. He should form his own Working Committee and run the Congress. In any case, the Congress had become a 'corrupt' organisation in that its registers contained a very large number of 'bogus members'. And he concluded ominously:

> After all, Subhas Babu is not an enemy of his country. He has suffered for it. In his opinion his is the most forward and boldest

> policy and programme. The minority can only wish it all success. If it cannot keep pace with it they must come out of the Congress. If they can, they will add to the majority. The minority may not obstruct on any account. They must abstain, when they cannot co-operate. I must remind all Congressmen that those, who being Congress-minded remain outside it by design, represent it most. Those, therefore, who feel uncomfortable in being in the Congress, may come out not in a spirit of ill will, but with the deliberate purpose of rendering more effective service.

Gandhi, in his own characteristic way, had declared war. Even as Bose celebrated his victory Gandhi was meticulously preparing to destroy him. The man who could use non-violence so skilfully was to use all his political skills now to defeat this, the most serious challenge to his rule.

13

DEFEAT

For Bose the elections were a defeat for the Congress machine controlled by Patel (a view with which Gandhi agreed). Gandhi himself, Bose thought, was above the fray – or should be. So, three days after Gandhi's declaration of war, Bose hurried to genuflect:

> I do not know what sort of opinion Gandhiji has of myself. But whatever his view may be, it will always be my aim and object to try and win his confidence for the simple reason that it will be a tragic thing for me if I succeed in winning the confidence of other people but fail to win the confidence of India's greatest man.

It was hardly the declaration of a revolutionary, and at least one American scholar has seen this as an example of Subhas' 'good boy, bad boy' behaviour: successfully challenging authority, then trying to win its favour. The psychological explanation may be valid, but the statement also revealed a sad misunderstanding of the political situation. Bose had organised the Left in a war against the Congress Right without realising that his main enemy was not Patel but Gandhi himself. He could not win the confidence of 'India's greatest man' as long as he stood where he did: he could not defeat Patel and be a friend of Gandhi. He was to pay dearly for the miscalculation. Perhaps, as some have suggested, he did not have the skills for ruthless political infighting – or the heart. He was a superb public organiser but a poor private intriguer. And now, not having anticipated the struggle with Gandhi, he did not quite know how to fight it.

In India Gandhi is a saint. He is always Gandhiji, Mahatma, Bapu: revered Gandhi, the great-souled one, father of the nation. He is the man who never did wrong in order to achieve his political ends. For him, so the legend goes, men were just as important as the ideas they believed in, if not more so. The legend is useful and instructive, but, like most, grossly exaggerated.

Gandhi was essentially a very shrewd politician who realised that religion was the easiest way to arouse the Indian people. It had been the basis on which he had constructed a national movement against the British, converting ineffectual Indian liberalism into strong, almost irresistible Indian nationalism. It would now give him his last great victory. He may not have been, as Churchill crudely put it, 'a seditious Middle-Temple lawyer posing as a half-naked fakir of a type well known in the East', but he could always combine elements of his 'Middle-Temple' background with the techniques of the fakir for political purposes. Now, having decided to finish Bose, he did so in a masterly fashion, proving that, while presidents might come and go, he would always remain the super-president.

Gandhi had to plan his moves against Bose with great care. The Congress constitution did not provide for the removal of the president: the delegates' vote could not be reversed. But it could be thwarted. Gandhi's followers still controlled the Working Committee and the All-India Congress Committee. Without their support no president could function. He might reign, but he could not rule. It was here that Gandhi sought to avenge his defeat.

Nirad Chaudhuri has suggested that Bose's illnesses were a psychological reaction to stress. He was invariably ill in prison; and as he faced his greatest political crisis he succumbed to an illness that was never properly diagnosed and that led to many strange twists and turns in an already complicated story. His temperature would begin to rise at noon, Bose would be racked by splitting headaches. It would reach a peak at about six p.m.; then he would begin to perspire profusely, and the fever would slowly subside. For hours after that he would lie still in his bed, ice-packs pressed to his throbbing head. Occasionally the fever persisted for days; at other times he would be normal for a day or two. The doctors' opinions varied, and it was only much later that they diagnosed it as broncho-pneumonia with liver and intestinal infections.

Bose had been keen to attend the Working Committee session at

Wardha on 22 February. But the doctors warned that, if he did, the annual session at Tripuri in early March was out. So Bose sent Patel what he thought was an innocuous telegram:

> KINDLY SEE MY TELEGRAM TO MAHATMAJI. REGRETFULLY FEEL WORKING COMMITTEE MUST BE POSTPONED TILL CONGRESS. PLEASE CONSULT COLLEAGUES AND WIRE OPINION – SUBHAS.

This message triggered a sequence of events which were to prove disastrous for him.

The Congress Right argued that it demonstrated his dictatorial ambitions. The annual session was only a few weeks away, but – because of an obscure illness that even his own doctors could not diagnose – he would not allow the committee to transact its normal business. Patel and eleven other Working Committee members issued a statement, drafted by Gandhi, that they were resigning. Nehru, characteristically, issued a separate statement of withdrawal – and Subhas and Sarat found themselves alone on the Working Committee.

As if that were not enough, it began to be rumoured that his illness was feigned. This allegation was only scotched by a specially invited medical board which examined him at the Tripuri Congress – and even when he was brought on a stretcher on to the dais, with one niece fanning him and another applying an ice-pack, delegates cried, 'Why don't you check whether he has onions under his armpits? Onions raise the temperature!'

Already, Gandhi had clawed back some of the gains that had accrued to Bose as a result of his election victory. Gandhi successfully converted a footling political dispute in a princely Indian state of Rajkot into a major diversion, so much so that Bose was unable to meet Gandhi before Tripuri and agree on who should serve in his Working Committee. Also, just before the Tripuri session began Gandhi declared that he had to remain in Rajkot – a thousand miles from Tripuri – and began a fast to death in order to obtain a solution to the inconsequential affair. The result – as during all the Mahatma's fasts – was that public and political attention were successfully diverted. At Tripuri the carefully planned Gandhian counter-offensive now made its final push.

In a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, preceding the open session, the Gandhians moved a resolution which requested 'the president to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji'. In moving the resolution, Pant compared Gandhi to Hitler, Mussolini and Lenin and asked, 'We have Gandhi. . . . Then why should we not reap the full advantages of that factor?' In the midst of the debate a news report was issued that, on the telephone from Rajkot, Gandhi had approved the text of the resolution. Gandhi later denied this, but that was enough to secure a narrow victory.

The open session – attended by more than 200,000 people – was Bose's first public setback. Bose, in his short presidential speech (read out by Sarat), repeated his demand that this was the moment to submit an ultimatum to the British government over Indian independence, ending his speech with a prayer for Gandhi's good health. The voting on the resolution clearly revealed that Bose's broad-left coalition had disintegrated. The Congress socialists, led by Narayan, abstained, unsure of either their loyalties or their own best interests; though the followers of the former communist, Roy, stayed with Bose, the communists agonised about supporting Bose. They had tabled a motion that diluted Pant and freed Bose. The night before the open session they met to decide their tactics should their amendment fail. While their secretary P.C. Joshi was dead set against Bose, the Bengal communists, who perhaps had an emotional identification with Bose, got their comrades to agree that should their amendment fail they would vote against the Pant resolution. The meeting had ended at 2 a.m., but at 6 a.m. one of Bose's principal backers, Dutt-Mazumdar, was hurriedly awakened and told that Joshi had managed to reverse this decision. Dutt-Mazumdar recollects getting up from a sick-bed to have the reversal righted – which, he says, 'led to a hysterical scene, with Joshi rolling on the floor declaring in Hindi, "You have cut my throat."'

The debate in the open session was no less emotional, with more than a hint of violence, some of it from Bose's supporters. But in the end the Gandhians had the vote. The old magic had worked: the Congress, faced with a choice between their great-souled one and Bose, had plumped for the god they knew.

Bose, sickened by the 'moral squalor' of Tripuri, thought for a time of leaving politics altogether. He was convinced that Nehru

had done him down. 'Nobody,' he wrote to his nephew, 'has done more harm to me personally and to our cause in this crisis than Pandit Nehru. If he had been with us – we would have had a majority.' Jawaharlal's ambivalence had contributed to the socialists' abstention, and in long letters – one of them running to twenty-seven typed pages – Subhas engaged in wordy duels with Nehru. They combined the touchiness that is part of the Bengali temperament ('You take up enthusiastically every possible point against me; what could be said in my favour you ignore'), with some well-honed digs at Nehru's vacillation and 'pious platitudes and frothy sentiments' about foreign affairs. Nehru, with uncharacteristic gentleness, defended himself, though not altogether convincingly.

That Nehru and Bose should have been rivals is understandable. Though Nehru was nine years older, both men had risen through the nationalist movements at the same time. In Indian eyes both had the same qualities: they were young, energetic, handsome, radical, left nationalists who conceived freedom as the beginning of sweeping socio-economic changes, and who were, as Dilip Roy later put it, 'utterly inaccessible to fear that makes us falter and cringe and to meanness that makes us carp or bargain.' Bose had been exasperated by Nehru's habit of abandoning well-conceived Left positions. However, since the late 1930s their relationship had prospered, and Bose, as Nehru himself acknowledged, had 'treated him with utmost regard and consideration'; he had been a political elder brother to whom Bose had often turned for advice. Now, as Jawaharlal once again discovered his more primitive loyalty to Gandhi, Subhas could not conceal his hurt and disappointment.

Years later, Nehru himself would acknowledge to a British correspondent that, yes, he had let Subhas down, but 'I did it because I have realised that, at that stage, whatever one's view might be about the way India should develop, *Gandhi was India* [Italics mine] Anything which weakened Gandhi weakened India. So I subordinated myself to Gandhi, although I was in agreement with what Subhas was trying to do.'

This attitude had always characterised Nehru's political life. As Gandhi himself would put it, 'We know that neither of us can do without the other, for there is a heart union between us which no intellectual differences can break.'

Bose had no such links, and saw Nehru's much-applauded 'artistic

introspection' – which always enabled him to be on the winning side – as convenient hypocrisy. In this sense Bose was more Western. It was Nehru, bored with Hindu rites and customs, who was more genuinely Hindu. His actions can be seen as conforming to the essential logic of Hindu philosophy, where almost anything can be made to mean anything else, where there is disagreement but no final break, and where, however great the differences, there are no endings – only compromise and consensus: the cycle endlessly repeated. Bose resented Nehru's good luck – the *bhagya* that had already brought him so much glory at so little cost; he distrusted his denial of religion, and was baffled by his vacillation. He would later tell Dilip:

> If he really wants to serve India through politics he must first of all make sure of his foundations. For if he doesn't take care to seek solid ground under his feet, the ground won't seek his feet either: consequently, he will never be able to stand perpendicular anywhere.

The Bose–Nehru relationship forms one of the most fascinating ifs cherished by the Indian Left. If only the two could have worked together. . . . Like all ifs it contains an element of wishful thinking. In the end, though both spoke for socialism, their practical interpretations of it were so different that there was an ideological divide. And though, during the war, Bose continued to make overtures to Gandhi, he never forgave Jawaharlal Nehru.

The Working Committee was still to be formed, and there began an exchange of letters and telegrams between Subhas and Gandhi. Bose, treating Tripuri merely as a defeat that balanced his earlier victory, was wooing Gandhi, urging him to act as an arbitrator. Gandhi was unmoved. With all the skill at his command he now unleashed active non-co-operation on Bose.

As in his fights with the British, the steel was coated with honey. All his letters began 'My dear Subhas' and ended 'love, Bapu', and he telegraphed 'I suggest your coming here and living with me. I undertake to nurse you to health while we are slowly conferring.' But almost simultaneously he suggested resignation: 'I do not know how far you are fit to attend to national work. If you are not I think you should adopt the only constitutional course open to you.'

Like a sleek prize-fighter, Gandhi scored innumerable points with accurate jabs and quicksilver footwork, while Bose – who had himself invoked the analogy of boxing when discussing the consequences of the presidential election – appeared like a plodding heavyweight. For every compromise solution Bose proposed, Gandhi had a refusal: bitterness between the old guard and the rest ran too deep, Gandhi claimed, and his involvement would be futile. Bose offered to 'retire' from all official positions if Gandhi would only resume the national struggle for independence: war, Subhas was convinced, was only a few months away, and a beleaguered Britain would not be able to resist a united Congress ultimatum of independence. Gandhi claimed his nostrils were full of 'violence in the air I breathe'. Even when Bose was prepared to accept all Gandhi's nominees on the Working Committee, the Mahatma could find no way of agreeing to this. He had successfully driven Bose into a corner, and even Nehru was moved to protest. He wrote to Gandhi: 'To try to push him out seems to me to be an exceedingly wrong step.' By the time Bose met Gandhi, just before the Calcutta A.I.C.C. session in late April 1939, only the formalities of the Gandhian victory remained to be completed. It was four months since the presidential elections, yet Bose had failed to form his cabinet. On the first day of the session he presented his resignation.

Nehru suggested a compromise but Bose, convinced all was lost, refused, and the Gandhian Rajendra Prasad assumed the presidency. Calcutta did not take kindly to its favourite son's being 'robbed' of his due, and there were violent protests both at the session and in the city at large. But now Bose's friends began to cut their political coats according to the new cloth. Kiran Shankar Roy, his erstwhile machine organiser, completed his conversion to Gandhism, the communists began to distance themselves, and even the Bengal revolutionaries were abusive.

Three days after the session Bose announced the formation of the Forward Bloc – a party within the Congress that would bring together the warring Left and fight, as before, not Gandhi but Gandhism.

Amidst this gloom there was only one bright moment. Tagore, who had written to Nehru in support of Bose's re-election as president, now hailed Subhas in rhapsodic terms as Bengal's leader;

and Subhas displayed a sense of mordant wit. When Forward Bloc was suggested as the name of the new political group, Sarat asked, 'But who will be the blockhead?'

Subhas butted in, 'Well, you know who is going to be the blockhead.' It was gallows humour, suitable for what was to follow.

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THE LONELY FURROW

The next twenty months of Bose's life are the most difficult for his biographer. He fought a series of losing battles with Gandhi and the Congress establishment that finally led to expulsion from the Congress and loss of control of the Bengal Congress. He almost single-handedly tried to build up the Forward Bloc, attracting enormous crowds wherever he went and writing fine polemical articles, but he never succeeded in creating a genuine mass party. All around him the Left splintered even further. But these public events, though sad, are easy enough to record and analyse. The parallel private events are still a mystery, or capable of so many interpretations as to make nonsense of any analysis. For, at some stage during this period, Bose began to plan an escape from India to Russia or somewhere in Europe to start what he would later call the 'second front of the Indian Independence Movement'.

It is easy to argue that Bose decided to escape as his options in India closed. This has been the conventional viewpoint, and it is the logical one. But it is more probable that the unfolding events in Europe dictated his moves. We cannot be sure. All we are left with are certain events of great anecdotal value but no definite historical merit.

Bose saw the Forward Bloc as an umbrella organisation bringing together all the various leftist groups. They would retain their individual, idiosyncratic and often conflicting identities, but they would come together for the purpose of working out a minimum programme. Such an arrangement had been discussed for a long time, at least since the Haripura Congress; but few of the established

Left groups were willing to join, and one of them – M.N. Roy's – was already organised as a rival body.

The Left groups did, however, come together to form a Left Consolidated Committee, which was inaugurated at Bombay on 21 June 1939 and was a remarkably heterogeneous body. It met just before the A.I.C.C. was to hold its regular meeting. There the Gandhians attacked individuals and groups starting civil disobedience without the approval of the provincial body. The committee decided to organise an all-India day of protest about the decision on 9 July. This achieved some success. Almost immediately the Working Committee was summoned to discuss this blatant breach of discipline. Gandhi was unrelenting, and it was he who drafted the Working Committee's resolution. It removed Bose from the residency of the Bengal Congress Committee and banned him from holding elective office for three years. Within Bengal this sharpened the hopeless factional squabbles, which ultimately led to the suspension of the Bose-controlled provincial committee and the imposition of Gandhi's own men.

While this messy battle went on Bose tried to get the Forward Bloc going. On 3 September 1939 he was addressing a 200,000-strong public meeting on the Marina sea beach in Madras when somebody thrust a newspaper into his hand. The headline told the story: Britain was now at war with Germany, and India had followed. Within hours of Chamberlain's broadcast Lord Linlithgow had, without consulting a single Indian, plunged four hundred million into a European war.

For Bose, of course, this was India's golden opportunity. A Britain at war would mean a weak Britain. Never would she be more amenable to pressure. The Congress should immediately launch its final struggle for freedom. Unexpectedly invited to attend the special Working Committee meeting held at Wardha on 8 September to decide the Congress' attitude to the war, Bose argued his case. But, caught between Gandhi's pacifism and the lukewarm interest of others, the Congress equivocated. It condemned fascism – taking Nehru's lead – and asked the British government to define its war aims. For Bose this amounted to an offer of co-operation with Britain's war effort and yet another opportunity lost.

Shortly afterwards he met some of his Forward Bloc colleagues,

and friends from other parties, in Lucknow to discuss the alternative nationalist strategy during the period of war. The meeting proved abortive. Dutt-Mazumdar and Bose travelled back to Calcutta together. On the way to the station Bose suddenly turned to Dutt-Mazumdar and asked, 'Can you go underground right here and now?'

Dutt-Mazumdar, taken aback, replied, 'I can, but not right away.' On the train he added, 'I feel I may have disappointed you by not going underground right there and then in Lucknow. But I feel *you* should go underground.'

Subhas was surprised. 'You want me to go underground?'

'Yes, you should flee the country. Sun Yat-Sen had to flee his country and go underground. Mazzini had to flee.'

They sat quietly for some time as the train wound its way towards Calcutta. Suddenly Bose said, 'Don't discuss this idea with anyone else.'

Dutt-Mazumdar believes that this is when Bose first started thinking of going abroad. It is certainly true that Subhas was thinking in terms of foreign connections. In summer 1939 he asked his nephew Amiya to take secretly to England a handwritten, signed message to the Soviet government. Amiya recollects that Bose was convinced the Right would do nothing and that the only way out was an armed revolution, possibly with the help of the U.S.S.R. Bose had, indeed, always been favourably inclined towards the Soviet Union. It was the country of Lenin, the country that had produced the first people's revolution and, above all, the country that had shown how a backward agricultural land could be modernised. Soon after this, as Soviet troops marched into eastern Poland and took their share of the loot agreed with Hitler, Bose turned to Ranadive, a leading Indian communist, and said with a broad grin that he would not have minded the help of a few Russian divisions in his fight with the British.

At about this time he once again began to concentrate on yoga. He had never doubted its power, and now he needed it even more. He spent long hours meditating, and occasionally he would slip out of Elgin Road to visit a yogi he admired or respected. But travel was on his mind, and in October 1939 he applied to the Bengal government for a passport to go to China. The Bengal government – always glad to be rid of Bose – quickly agreed. But Delhi, who

already 'strongly suspected' Bose of being a foreign agent, were worried about a 'peripatetic revolutionary' being let loose in central Asia and seeking to foment an anti-British movement with the aid of foreign powers. Though Nehru had recently been allowed to visit China, Delhi saw no problems in answering accusations of favouritism. As one government official put it, 'Nehru whatever his faults is an entirely different type from Subhas Bose'; and 'a dangerous man like Subhas Bose should be under proper control under the Defence of India Act'. The Bengal government began working towards this objective – one consequence of which was that Subhas Bose sought a meeting with the Viceroy.

On Tuesday 10 October at 10.15 a.m. Bose, for the first and only time in his life, walked up to the Viceregal Lodge. He told the Viceroy how ruthlessly and partially censorship was being used in Bengal, that political prisoners were still in jail despite a promise to review their cases, and about the vindictive nature of the Bengal government. The Viceroy, as usual, stonewalled, though in a telephone message his private secretary conveyed to the governor of Bengal that 'the Viceroy liked him personally and the talk was quite friendly'. The differences were so great that there could be no movement. Bose also used his time in Delhi to meet various Indian leaders, including Jinnah, whom he found vain, opinionated, and sure that he and he alone held the future of India in his hands.

Subhas did not get very far. But his constant battering of the Congress did have an effect. At last, nearly two months after war had been declared, it acted. In response to the Congress request that the British clarify their war aims, Linlithgow had replied that it was too early to do so. In any case, he said, it would serve no purpose. There were far too many differences among the Indian political parties, and Britain's aims in India were all set out in the preamble to the act of 1919 and the statement of dominion status of 1929, and constituted the purpose, meaning and message of the massive 1935 act. All he would say was that Britain was fighting to resist fascist aggression and after the war would be prepared to discuss modifications to the 1935 act. Almost as a footnote he added that he would not be unwilling to set up consultative committees during the war. No slap in the face could have been more resounding, and the Congress ministries in the provinces resigned.

The Left Consolidation Committee, however, was now in ruins.

In October the socialists had left it – in November the communists had followed. And in Bengal the fight with the Gandhians reached its inevitable climax. In August the executive council of the provincial Congress committee re-affirmed its loyalty to Bose; in October it repeated this, placed 5,000 rupees at his disposal and asked him to lead the Congress in the coming Calcutta municipal elections. On 20 December the Working Committee ousted the entire provincial committee and appointed its own ad-hoc committee.

So Bose progressively became caught between the Gandhians and the Raj. The government was convinced that Bose had backed himself into a cul-de-sac. But for a politician in such trouble he showed uncommon energy. In November the working committee of the Forward Bloc decided to hold an anti-compromise conference at the same time and place as the Congress held its annual session. And when the Congress Working Committee called for a constituent assembly, he recalled Trotsky's and Lenin's attitude to the Kerensky-inspired Russian one, and Sinn Fein's contempt for Lloyd George's Irish Convention. For Bose, the Forward Bloc would play this historical role – although occasionally his own rhetoric overwhelmed him. 'We can legitimately claim that today "Forward Bloc Zindabad" ["Long live the Forward Bloc"] has become a mass slogan. Its message has reached the remotest villages and has roused the sympathy and support of the masses everywhere.'

But, before anything concrete could be achieved, the government struck. By the second week of April most of the senior Forward Bloc leaders had been arrested. Bose was not touched largely because he was enjoying what J.A. Herbert, the Bengal governor, would later call 'anomalous immunity': which meant that Herbert's Muslim League Bengal ministers could not arrest Bose because they feared his Muslim following. For Bose had managed in a limited sphere to do the impossible – construct a Hindu–Muslim coalition; he had done this by aligning his Forward Bloc with radical elements in the Muslim League.

Bose may have surprised even himself by this feat – for, quite uncharacteristically, he appears to have underestimated its consequences. Certainly Herbert was alarmed at the ease with which Bose worked his Hindu–Muslim coalition centred round the Muslim trio of Siddique, Mayor of Calcutta, Nooruddin, a member of the Dacca Nawab family, and M.A.H. Ispahani, leader of the

Muslim League in the Calcutta Corporation. Herbert was not even sure about the reliability of the Chief Minister, Huq, whom Subhas has consistently wooed. Even Nazimuddin, the Home Minister, and closest to the British, feared Bose's growing Muslim support. Weeks after Bose had finally been arrested, Bengal intelligence officials would anxiously debate the possibility of Nazimuddin coming to an agreement with Subhas and enhancing his 'popularity and prestige'. It was, of course, a coalition at the level of élite leaders – and rather disparate, at that – but even then it was rare. So did Bose just not realise what he might have gained by remaining in India and working on this regional, but significant, coalition? That would seem to be the case – for now he began seriously to look for allies who would enable him to get out of India.

For some time Bose had been friendly with Niranjan Singh Talib, editor of *Desh Darpan*, a Calcutta Sikh magazine. Through him he had met Achhar Singh Cheena, a member of the Punjab-based pro-communist Kirti Kisan Party (later on during the war it formally merged with the official Indian communists). The Kirti had good contacts in the Punjab and the tribal area that separated British India from Afghanistan. Could Cheena, Bose enquired, get him across the tribal areas into Afghanistan and then over the river Oxus into Russia? Cheena was more than willing to help, and a few weeks later – in May 1940 – Bhagat Ram Talwar, a young Kirti worker in the small Pakhtun village of Ghalla Dher, received some unexpected visitors.

Talwar had often scouted for the party in the tribal areas. Cheena and Ram Kishan Singh, another Kirti worker, told Talwar that they wanted him to escort 'somebody' to the Soviet Union. Such journeys were quite common, but Cheena warned Talwar that they were dealing with a 'very important person'. The journey must be safe and they must on no account be caught.

Bose and Cheena could not have chosen a worse moment. Kirti's contact in Kabul had recently been arrested and, with the war now six months old, both spying by various intelligence agencies and surveillance had increased. Peshawar, they concluded, would have to be the centre of operations, and the three travelled there to discuss plans. Here Talwar renewed contact with Abad Khan, a transport contractor who had often undertaken similar jobs and had a reputation for being politically conscious. For a week Abad Khan, Ram

Kisan and Talwar scouted various routes and arrangements. Finally they decided the best route would be from Peshawar through the Gandab valley to Jallalabad, one of Afghanistan's most important towns; then Bose would make a detour to see Haji Mohammad Amin at Adda Sharif, returning to Jallalabad and finally going on to Kabul. The VIP would have to stay in Peshawar for a few days in a house that belonged to another contact, and soon a house in Peshawar's Kissa Khawani Bazaar, owned by Mian Feroze Shah, was fixed up. Some time in early June Cheena was informed, and everything seemed set.

Bose, meanwhile, had continued in his increasingly futile attempts to get Gandhi and the Congress to act. He was now convinced that Germany would win the war in Europe – the golden opportunity would have passed and, unless India did something, it would again be left on the sidelines. In mid-June he heard the news of the fall of Paris in Mayor Abdur Rahman Siddique's room in the Calcutta Corporation. Ispahani was there:

> I remember how Subhas' face lit up with joy. He hugged some of us and danced round the room like a merry schoolboy. To him the fall of France was his victory, the victory of his people – as with France prostrate, the day of reckoning for Britain was close at hand. He was sure that Britain could not avoid abject surrender and equally confident that the mighty empire would melt like snow on a hot day.

A few evenings later he declared, 'I predict that England will accept defeat and surrender by 16 July.'

It was this certainty about coming events that Bose carried with him to the second all-India conference of the Forward Bloc, where on 18 June 1940 he proclaimed:

> It is for the Indian people to make an immediate demand for the transference of power to them through a Provisional National Government. . . . When things settle down inside India and abroad, the Provisional National Government will convene a Constitutional Assembly for framing a fully-fledged Constitution for this country.

He had nothing but contempt for those Indian politicians who were still thinking of joining with Britain in resisting the Germans.

> Some of our statesmen, it seems, have been possessed with the dream of India being converted into a bastion of democratic resistance against the dictators' hordes. What a grotesque picture.

At the end of the conference Bose made one last effort to convince these statesmen of his views. In Bombay he met Jinnah and Veer Savarkar, and in Wardha he met Gandhi. Jinnah did see possibilities in the war, but solely for the Muslim League, and even then in collaboration with the British; Savarkar, in the characteristic style of a blinkered Hindu nationalist, wanted more Indians to enlist in the British Army to get military training – yet advised Bose to get foreign help to fight the British. Gandhi was paternal, but once again the answer was no. He could not even get himself to bless any movement Bose might start. There was some affection between the two, but no real meeting of hearts, no real bond like that between Gandhi and Nehru. Bose and Gandhi would never meet again.

On the way back to Calcutta, Bose stopped off at Nathalal Parekh's Marine Drive house, and one night the two went for a midnight stroll. Suddenly Bose asked Parekh, 'Do you know the kind of death I wish for myself?'

Parekh, surprised, replied, 'No.'

Bose looked up into the sky and said, 'I should be flying very high and then I must suddenly crash down to earth and die. That would be wonderful.'

Years later Parekh would recall this story with a deep, chilling poignancy.

Bose returned to Calcutta in the last week of June to learn from Cheena that everything was now ready for his journey to Peshawar and beyond. But then, suddenly and almost incomprehensibly, Bose announced in the *Forward Bloc* that he himself would launch Sirajuddowla Day (organised for 3 July by the Bengal Congress in memory of the Bengal king whose defeat by Clive had led to the establishment of the Raj) by leading a procession for the demolition of the Holwell monument, erected to honour the British dead in the Black Hole of Calcutta. Neither his friends nor his enemies could understand the reasons, and even today it is not clear why he should

suddenly have been so keen to get back to a British prison – for he knew that would be the ultimate result.

Tactically, it was a brilliant plan. All Indian nationalists, both Hindus and Muslims, agreed that the Black Hole was a 'faked monument of shame' and, in fact, an imaginative piece of British propaganda to justify their own barbarities. For Muslims it held a special significance as 'an unwarranted stain' on the memory of the last independent ruler of Bengal, as Bose put it. Yet the Bengal government had been making soothing noises about having the monument removed. Why did Bose persist?

With hindsight several explanations are possible. Government intelligence sources reported that Bose was under pressure, forced into a demonstration of political virility in the face of taunts from the Congress establishment that his political actions did not match his verbal belligerence. Calcutta revolutionaries believed he wanted to be imprisoned in order to contact his revolutionary comrades who had already been jailed – the idea being to discuss his plans for escape. Dwijendranath Bose, a nephew, in a charming anecdote, told me Bose decided on this march because his escape plans had leaked. Early one morning Dr B.D. Dey, chief engineer of the Calcutta Corporation, arrived at Elgin Road. He was met by Dwijendranath, who took him in to see Subhas. No sooner had Dey been ushered in than he blurted out, 'Subhas Babu, before you go, please make me Chief Executive Officer.'

Bose, feigning surprise, asked, 'Where am I going?'

Dey said, 'Sardar Balder Singh told me last night that you are planning to go to Russia.'

Bose laughed. 'Dr Dey, how many pegs did you have with the Sardar last night? You must be still somewhat hungover. What will I gain by leaving India? The struggle has to be waged here. In fact, I am at this very moment starting a movement to remove the Holwell monument.'

For Dwijendranath this came as a complete surprise. 'That was the first time I had heard that Uncle was going to launch the movement to remove the Holwell monument. The movement was started without any preparation and its whole motive was diversionary, but we somehow managed to run it.'

On the afternoon of 2 July, the day before the proposed march, Bose was having tea with Alderman B.C. Chatterji when he was

arrested under Section 129 of the Defence of India Act and taken to Presidency Jail for the eleventh and last time. As so often, it was a bungled arrest, with the Viceroy annoyed that he had not been informed. As usual, too, Bose's health soon deteriorated, and his only moment of relief came when Ispahani brought greetings and news from Lala Shankarlal, an old friend and rich business backer who had just returned from abroad. Shankarlal was not allowed to see Bose, but Ispahani cheerfully conveyed his apparently innocent messages: 'All friends are well and happy and are anxiously waiting to welcome you;' 'We see no reason for you to be where you are when there is so much to be done outside.' Shankarlal's friends were Subhas' Japanese and other foreign contacts.

Bose himself had arranged Shankarlal's visit to Japan. Government sources reported that Shankarlal had met the Japanese Foreign Minister and German, Italian and Russian ambassadors, also channelling some Japanese money to the Forward Bloc. Bose had already established contacts with the Japanese in Calcutta. Dwijendranath recollects that sometime in 1939, just before the annual Congress session, Japan's Vice-Foreign Minister Ohashi visited Calcutta and met Bose secretly at the house of a Bengali politician. What they discussed we shall never know, since the only witness seems to have been a Bengali servant who served tea and sweets while Dwijendranath and his brother kept guard on the approach roads.

The only evidence that has ever been presented about all this was the treaty between Bose and the Japanese which Shankarlal showed K.M. Munshi in 1942, claiming that it had been entered into through Shankarlal's good offices. But even if the treaty is fanciful (and, if there was a treaty, why did Bose not head for Japan when he escaped – as he could have done and as the British thought he had done – instead of Russia?) the British government was convinced of his Japanese contacts. It tried unsuccessfully to prosecute Shankarlal for travelling to Japan under a false passport, and on 10 September 1940 Herbert informed Linlithgow that, if all the prosecutions launched against Bose failed, a warrant could be issued based on what the government knew about his relations with Japan.

On 29 November, after writing a political testament, Bose went on hunger strike. He would drink only water with a little salt and would not allow himself to be force-fed. A Bengal official declared:

> My personal view is that Bose's hunger strike will not be followed to such lengths as would endanger his life and that he will find some reason for calling it off when he finds it sufficiently uncomfortable. As he has been suffering for some time from overeating and insufficient exercise it seems likely that a little starvation will improve his health.

But the government was getting concerned. On 2 December 1940 it decided to release Bose if his condition deteriorated. Three days later doctors reported that it had indeed done so, and argued that unless he was released he might die. On the afternoon of 5 December a reluctant Herbert agreed with his cabinet's decision to release Bose unconditionally. The government was following a cat-and-mouse policy – the moment Bose recovered, he would be jailed.

That day Subhas was taken back to his Elgin Road house in an ambulance. He was immediately rushed up to his first-floor room and, as ever, relations, friends and sundry other visitors crowded round him. Among them was one of Sarat's sons, a young Calcutta Medical College student named Sisir. A diffident, shy young man, he had never quite established that degree of warmth and intimacy with his famous uncle that came naturally to his elder bothers and cousins. Sisir was having a post-prandial rest at Sarat's house when Subhas' personal servant came to tell him he had been summoned to the great man's bedside again. He was asked to sit on the bed right next to Bose, who asked in Bengali, 'Can you do a job for me?'

Sisir, bemused, nodded his head.

The job appeared simple enough. Sisir would have to drive his uncle one night a fair distance from Calcutta, say to Burdwan. The operation would have to be quick, efficient, and quiet. Only one other person was privy to it – Sisir's cousin Illa – and Sisir must not breathe a word to anybody else.

Subhas Bose, at forty-three, had finally decided that it was time to escape from India and continue the struggle from abroad.

15

'I AM OFF: YOU GO BACK'

Subhas Bose's escape from India in the winter of 1940–1 forms a significant episode in the history of Indian nationalism. For many years little was known about it, and – though recently a wealth of reminiscence has surfaced, even today fantasy and myth persist.

Bose, unconditionally released, was free to go where he wanted, though the Calcutta CID kept an almost round-the-clock watch. But escape out of India required ingenuity and planning. India is a terrifyingly open society: everybody knows what everybody else is doing, or at least is eager to know. Bose's situation accentuated this. 38/2 Elgin Road was a joint-family house; and he was a mass politician trying a plan of the sort that was the exclusive preserve of small revolutionary cells.

The government files contain this report:

> C.207 reports on 15th Dec. that Akbar Shah (F.B.) of N.W.F.P. is expected to come to Calcutta to see Subhas in a day or two in connection with the A.I.F.B. Conference to be held at Delhi on 22nd and 23rd Dec. '40.

Akbar Shah's visit concealed the most vital ingredient in Bose's developing plans. These had been progressing in many hours of talks with Sisir (who was slowly taken into confidence) and followed Cheena's scheme. Bose would travel to Peshawar, and from there friends would escort him over that curious no-government's-

land, the tribal areas, to Kabul and freedom. Peshawar by train was no problem. From Calcutta's Howrah station every night steamed the Delhi–Kalka express, and from Delhi the frontier mail train ran to Peshawar. But where should Bose board the train? He could not very well do it at Howrah – he might as well telegraph the government that he was escaping. Eventually Asansol, one of its wayside stops in the Bengal–Bihar countryside was selected: it was near Dhanbad, where Ashoke Bose lived; his house might be a useful staging-post.

Akbar Shah, a respectable government leader in the small Punjab town of Nawsharra whose revolutionary instincts were now confined to maintaining excellent contacts with younger, more adventurous revolutionaries, readily agreed to organise the Peshawar–Kabul part of the journey. One evening, when Sisir came for his by-now-regular nocturnal chat, he was introduced to this handsome Pathan. Secret addresses, code words for communication and a suitable disguise were quickly arranged. Sisir was asked to see Akbar Shah off at Howrah. On the way Akbar Shah did some shopping at the Muslim department store Wachell Molla (a couple of pairs of pyjamas, a black fez), and 'accidentally' – as part of the elaborate care taken by Bose – left it in the car. Sisir completed the purchases: flannel shirts, pillows, quilts, *kabuli* sandals favoured by people of the tribal areas, copies of the Koran, a bedroll, a suitcase and attaché case marked M.Z., and a visiting card, and hid them in a cupboard in his house.

Now the final preparations began. A German Wanderer car was put through its paces and given a thorough overhaul. Sisir practised changing tyres and reconnoitred the route to Ashoke's place. Akbar Shah, however, had run into unexpected difficulties with Abad Khan, who was essential in providing a guide for the journey from Peshawar to Kabul, and Khan was worried about being involved in such an adventure. Bose was due in court on 27 January 1941, and time was running out. The deadline was quickly communicated to Akbar Shah, who once again pressed Abad Khan for a firm answer. 'At last,' Khan confessed afterwards, 'without having made any arrangements, I told them to send for Bose.' Soon Bose sent a message to Akbar Shah that he would be arriving in Peshawar by the frontier mail train on 19 January. The great escape was ready to begin.

Although Subhas made a point of bidding goodbye to his old guru Beni Madhav Das, he did not tell Prabhavati. Convinced he had renounced the world, she afterwards begged Sarat and Bivabati to say where he was. They could only plead helplessness. But, though Prabhavati never saw nor heard from Subhas again, her faith in him remained intact. In 1943, as she lay dying, someone pictured her as queen-mother to Subhas, the would-be king of India. 'Don't say such things,' she retorted. 'I never wish, even in my dreams, that my Subhas be made a king. He always knew service to his motherland to be his life's mission. May I too always see him as a servant of his country.'

Bose fixed 16 January as the day of his departure. He had already announced, and evidently convinced his largely ignorant family, that he was going into seclusion to pray and meditate. Part of his large bedroom was partitioned off with screens, leaving a small aperture for the cook to serve the food. Nobody was to disturb him while he was in retreat. To make the impression complete, Bose decided to have a ritualistic family dinner. On the evening of the 16th he put on his Bengali best – silk *dhoti* and *chaddar* – and, served by his mother, ate a specially prepared meal. Then, as his family retired, Bose disappeared behind the curtains to begin his 'retreat'.

Only four people remained – his niece Illa and his nephews Aurobindo, Dwijendranath and Sisir, who had arrived with the car. Slowly, as the other Boses went to sleep, Subhas Bose became Mohammed Ziauddin, Travelling Inspector, Empire of India Life Assurance Company Limited – permanent address: Civil Lines, Jubbalpore. In place of the *dhoti* and *chaddar* came broad pyjamas, a long coat and a black fez. There was only one hitch. His normal spectacles were far too conspicuous, and he discarded them for ones he had not worn since being Mayor of Calcutta nearly a decade before. At last everything was ready: the last inquisitive family member was asleep, and at about 1.30 Dwijendranath, on the look-out, loudly cleared his throat, which was the signal for the all-clear. Bose bid Illa a very affectionate farewell, whispering, 'God bless you,' and then he, Sisir and Aurobindo quietly trooped downstairs to the car. Soon Sisir and Subhas were away.

At breakfast-time they reached Bararee. Sisir dropped Subhas some four hundred yards from Ashoke's house and continued with the elaborate but necessary drama. He quickly coached his elder

brother in the part he had to play, and the uncle and nephew met as perfect strangers. Mohammed Ziauddin, insurance agent, looking for coalfield business among executives, met Ashoke Bose, unsuspecting engineer.

Ashoke, in fact, had been told the outline of his uncle's plans on one of his visits to Calcutta, and played his part to perfection: he said he had to get to work; perhaps Mr Ziauddin could come back in the evening. But, said Ziauddin, he had nowhere to go – could he wait here till Ashoke came back? By all means, said Ashoke. Ziauddin was introduced to Sisir, both feigning lack of interest in each other; a guest-room was fixed up, and Ashoke's Muslim servant hurried to attend him. Bose rested in his room the whole day, and in the evening the theatre was resumed. Ashoke and Ziauddin conversed in English; this time they discussed the best place to board the express. Ashansol was the divisional headquarters of the East Indian Railways – a crowded, noisy place, always guarded by a contingent of government railway police. It was decided to board the train at Gomoh, a small wayside station about thirty miles from Ashoke's place. Since Sisir did not know the way, Ashoke offered to come along as a guide; and, since he was unwilling to leave his wife alone at night, she was also included in the secret. Ziauddin was served dinner in his room, and after a polite public farewell he left the house, ostensibly to catch a taxi.

Half an hour later Sisir, Ashoke and Ashoke's wife followed, picked Bose up from the roadside and drove at a leisurely pace on to Gomoh. On the way they stopped in the silent Bihar countryside, and Bose told his nephews about his plans. He was bound for Moscow and eventually Berlin; he hoped to be away by the time the court case started and all hell broke loose. For his young nephews it was an intensely poignant moment. They arrived at Gomoh just as the midnight train was due, and Subhas walked majestically over the deserted bridge, a sleepy porter lumbering behind him with his luggage; his final words were, 'I am off: you go back.'

As Bose checked into room 6 of the Taj Mahal hotel in Peshawar he had every reason to feel pleased with himself. The train ride to Delhi had been uneventful, and on the frontier mail between Delhi and Peshawar he had played his role even more convincingly. At Peshawar Mian Akbar Shah had boarded the train, checked Bose was on it and followed him to the Taj Mahal hotel.

But here things were not quite so simple. He could not stay indefinitely at the hotel, so the next day, Abad Khan moved him to one of the houses he had hired. That night, Akbar Shah brought along Bhagat Ram.

Here we are faced with a problem common to all historians but nevertheless irritating: conflict of dates and the nuances of recollection. Abad Khan, who was imprisoned for four years for his part in Bose's escape, confessed to the police under torture to a sequence of events somewhat different from that described in suffocating detail by Bhagat Ram Talwar. According to Bhagat Ram, Bose spent a total of three days in Peshawar, his time divided between the Taj Mahal hotel and Abad Khan's house. Abad Khan would have it that he spent twelve days at various places. There is no way of resolving the contradictions. Abad Khan is not available; Bhagat Ram's happens to be the latest and fullest account.

Abad Khan had decided that his house was not safe enough. It was very close to adjacent houses and, with Akbar Shah and the others insisting on visiting it frequently, there was always the danger of the neighbours' overhearing their conversation. Then there was Mohd. Shah, a landlord friend of Akbar Shah. Abad Khan had never liked him, and was horrified when he suggested that Dr Khan Sahib, the previous Congress minister of the province, should be informed of Bose's arrival. The idea was quickly ridiculed, but Abad Khan transferred Bose to another house, costlier but quieter. Here Bose was virtually under house arrest for a couple of days. Abad Khan would supply him with vegetables, meat, tea, etc., see that he had enough of them to cook himself meals, lock him up and then leave for the day. In the evenings he would return, to be joined by Akbar Shah and Bhagat Ram. They would discuss the next stage of the journey. Bose was quite clear where he wanted to go: Moscow.

According to Abad Khan, the longer Bose stayed cooped up in the Kabuli Gate house the more worried he became:

> One day he offered me his gold watch, but I refused to accept it. As no arrangement could be made to send him to Kabul he was growing more weary day by day. He also suspected me and told me that Akbar Shah told him that he would be sent to Kabul by some Mukaram or Muqarab Khan. He asked me who this man

was, but I replied that I did not know him. I told him that my name was Abad Khan and that he should not worry. I also told him that none except God could arrest him. He was pleased to hear this.

However, Abad Khan himself was worried. The date for Bose's appearance in court was getting nearer, and he knew that once the escape was known all India would be crawling with British agents looking for him. He must be sent to Kabul as soon as possible. But, try as he would, he could not find the guide he needed.

At last, on 21 January, an Afghan government servant who had been an agent of Abad Khan since 1930 introduced him to a responsible Afridi guide. Early the very next day, Abad Khan hired a 1932 Chevrolet, picked up Bose and Bhagat Ram and drove through the early-morning traffic of Peshawar, past the barrier at Jamrod, towards Fort Salop. On the right side of the Fort there was a hilly track which led towards the Afridi tribal territory. Here Bose, Bhagat Ram and the Afridi guide got out of the car; Abad Khan provided Bose with some final advice, and the physically most difficult stage of Bose's journey began.

Journeying in these regions, particularly for a politician used to fairly sedentary activities, was far from romantic. The route traversed a fiercely hot, stony desert: no trees, no grass; occasionally a few thorny bushes, now and again a couple of mud houses, but nearly always just dry, arid land. Though it was winter, the day produced a dry intense heat totally unlike anything Bose had experienced in the Indo-Gangetic plains, and they seemed to be forever climbing and descending hills: a climb of about 400 feet, followed by a descent of some 600 feet, then a climb again. For Bose, who despite his recent illness was still a fairly heavy man, the journey was exhausting. Since Bose knew none of the languages of the region it had been decided that he would act the deaf-mute uncle to Bhagat Ram's nephew, both on pilgrimage to a Muslim shrine.

Within a few hours Bose felt that he had been walking for days, and was only relieved when Ram told him that they were no longer in British India. This was the land of the free tribal Pathans, who recognised no government and lived the life of their ancestors. Bose was instantaneously revitalised. He jumped up in the air, stamped his feet on the ground and shouted, 'Here I kick George VI.' He

laughed, he gurgled with happiness, he spat: 'Here I spit on the face of the Viceroy!'

From that moment on even the journey seemed easy. By nightfall they had reached the village of Pishkan Maina. Nobody knew them, or even cared who they were, yet food and hospitality were free, and even the simple meal of tea and salted maize cakes was remarkably refreshing. But the accommodation was less inviting. Twenty-five people were herded into a room without any furniture, cots or even windows, and with only a thick layer of dry grass to serve as a mattress. Often during the night Bose had to get up and go outside to get some fresh air.

The next afternoon Bhagat Ram arranged a mule for Bose, and slowly they passed the various landmarks on the way to Kabul. At 1 a.m. on 24 January they reached their first Afghan village. But, though the trek through the tribal area had got round the British control points, they still could not take advantage of the regular public transport to Kabul – the routes were bound to be infested with officials and spies of the Afghan government. That left lifts on trucks – the life-line of the Afghan economy; and it was perched precariously on one laden with tea-chests that they got to Jalalabad, the most important city in Afghanistan after Kabul. Now only Bundak, high up on the mountain road to Kabul, remained as a possible obstacle. It contained a customs checkpoint where foreigners' papers were checked. But by the time they arrived, on another truck, it was four in the morning – the slackest period of the night. The customs guard was asleep, and Bose and Talwar quickly joined the driver in a café. The last hurdle had been jumped. Kabul was only thirteen miles away. They arrived at Kabul's Lahori Gate at mid-afternoon on 27 January 1941. But for almost twenty-four hours the world had known that Subhas Bose had escaped.

Ever since the morning of the 17th, Illa had been slipping inside the screens in Subhas' room and eating the food brought in by the cook. On the night of Saturday the 25th, as arranged, she had not touched it. The cook raised the alarm. Sarat had made one small change: he had decided it would be wiser if the family 'discovered' Subhas had fled, rather than leaving it to the police to do so when he failed to appear in court. To make the act complete he had gone as usual to his country home at Rishra. When nephews arrived with the news he feigned perfect surprise, and skilfully taking over the

main role, led the rest of the family, and indeed the country, through the ensuing intricacies. He presided over a *durbar* at 38/2 Elgin Road, sent telegrams to various parts of the country and emissaries into the byways and institutions of Calcutta. Sisir visited the Kalighat temple, where a *sadhu* said that of course he had known all along that Subhas Babu would renounce the world, but that he would ask the mother-goddess in the night and see what she had to say. The *sadhu*'s confusion matched that among most of the family, among the public and in the Raj. But Sarat kept everybody on the mystic trail. When Gandhi telegraphed in surprise, 'STARTLING NEWS ABOUT SUBHAS. PLEASE WIRE TRUTH. HOPE ALL WELL', Sarat told him, 'CIRCUMSTANCES INDICATE RENUNCIATION'. For some time no *sadhu* was safe. The police chased *sadhus* in Benares, Allahabad, the Himalayas and even in Pondicherry, and arrested some in Madras. They investigated rumours that Bose had left for Japan by ship, and as late as September 1941 were trying to run him down in Bangkok. For the moment the staid and decaying political scene in India was convulsed: a major mass leader had just vanished completely.

Kabul in 1941 was little more than a glorified village. There were about fifteen brick and cement buildings: the king's palace, a few apartment buildings, the embassies and consulates. The great majority lived in mud houses and for the traveller, particularly a fugitive, there was only the *serai*: a sort of café, where most people ate on the pavements and slept on *charpoys* or beds in a large communal hall – though there was the odd private room. It was at a *serai* that Bhagat Ram Talwar secured a room. It provided some privacy and a couple of cots – nothing else. They had to acquire bedding, fuel – and some second-hand woollen garments for Bose.

Nobody had expected him in Kabul, and no arrangements had been made. For well over a year he had persistently tried to contact the Russians, but without any success: at every stage they had rebuffed him. However, they had never categorically said no, and Bose, still confident of the Russia of Lenin's revolution, was determined to unlock their door. His choice of the Kirti Party had been dictated by this consideration. Not only did they know how to get people out of India by the land route, but they also had contacts with the Soviet government.

But, as Bhagat Ram would confess later, 'during this period we

had no contacts with that country through their embassy in Kabul or through any other source'. Achhar Singh Cheena had returned from Moscow with nothing to show for his efforts. The international situation, Cheena had been told, was complicated and the Russians did not want to embarrass the British; (Bose was probably not aware of this latest development). Ram was in a unenviable position. He had never been to Kabul before, knew little Persian (the language favoured in Afghanistan) and had no idea of how to contact the Russians. He and Bose spent some time reconnoitring the embassy: a straightforward entry was ruled out, and eventually it was decided that Bhagat Ram would approach the officials. For three successive days the two men sat on the high walls enclosing a large open area on the right bank of the river Kabul, just opposite the embassy. Every time a Russian emerged they hastened to make contact, but without success.

Bose decided that the only alternative left was an approach to the Germans. He quickly wrote out a letter in Bengali to Sarat and an article in English on the Forward Bloc, and advised Bhagat Ram on the method to be used to contact his family in Calcutta. He had decided he would walk into the German embassy on his own.

As it happened the walk to the German embassy took them past the Russian embassy, and on the way they saw the Russian ambassador's car immobilised in mud. It seemed a godsend and Bhagat Ram immediately approached the ambassador. 'I have Subhas Bose with me and he is seeking asylum in the Soviet Union.'

The ambassador was suspicious. 'How do I know you have Subhas Bose with you?'

'Well, take a good look at him. He is standing next to me dressed as an Afghan national. In any case, it can be checked with photographs that have been published.'

The ambassador looked at Bose for a long time. Was this a British plot? He had grave suspicions that the British had allowed Bose to escape in order to create trouble between Russia and Afghanistan. In any case, he could not act without instructions from Moscow. As Bhagat Ram watched in dismay, the ambassador looked away and the car drove off. The Russian connection had failed.

After a detour they approached the German embassy, which proved much more receptive. The cover story Bose had prepared was not required, and as Bose approached the gate the sentry

opened it and allowed him in. He was met by a delighted young officer who had just been reading about his escape, and who took him to Pilger, the long-serving German ambassador. Pilger had met Bose on one of his visits to the German Foreign Office, and was just as pleased to see him – though nervous and worried. It was rash of Bose to have come to see him like this, he said. Kabul was crawling with agents of the Afghan and British governments. When Bose replied that that was all the more reason why he should be sheltered at the embassy till he could be given a safe escort out, Pilger became even more nervous. There were far too many Afghans working at the embassy – nobody knew how many of them were spies. He would immediately contact Berlin, and was hopeful of a favourable reply; but Bose should not come to the embassy – he should keep in touch with Herr Thomas of Siemens. The arrangements would take time. The Afghan government conducted very strict border checks, and there was very little traffic across the border. Soon after Bose left, Pilger contacted the Italian and Russian ambassadors, and telegraphed to Berlin the Russian suspicion that it was all a British plot.

Meanwhile, Bose and Talwar were condemned to a precarious existence in the *serai*. They had already spent six days there – far too many for travellers stopping at a place meant for itinerant drivers of mules and horses. They made a curious pair: one older, heavier in build and pretending to be deaf and dumb; the other younger and fitter – both wandering about Kabul all day and returning to the *serai* in the evening. They looked suspiciously like agents waiting for a contact, or smugglers. One Afghan government spy had, in fact, been watching them very closely. The evening before they were to meet Herr Thomas, he struck. He wanted answers to a whole series of questions. Who were they? What were they doing here? How long were they going to stay? Bhagat Ram, through a judicious mixture of piteous explanation (his uncle was deaf and dumb, had come for treatment in Kabul and was waiting to get into hospital) and an appropriate bribe, saw him off. But he would be back.

The next day Herr Thomas had no answers to their increasingly urgent questions. Berlin was glad that Bose had escaped, but arrangements for safe conduct were still being made. Would Bose please come back and see him after another three days for a message and instructions from Berlin?

The pattern of their stay in Kabul was now set. Every three days a meeting with Herr Thomas, who would smile affably and offer financial help (which they refused) but no firm commitment.

The next day the spy reappeared. He could not understand why it should be so difficult to get hospital space. He was convinced they were smugglers, and insisted they come to the police station. When Bhagat Ram increased the bribe he left, but this was only a temporary reprieve. He appeared again the following day, and Talwar had to part with his gold wristwatch. Talwar went to see Uttam Chand, a former comrade of his, and in the face of some reluctance persuaded him to take them.

The move meant that, for the first time since he had left Peshawar sixteen days back, Bose could enjoy homely comforts: a warm, heated room well covered in the central Asian fashion with carpets and mattresses, the chance to change his filthy *salwar* and shirt, a bath, and Bengali music on the radio. But the man who lived on the floor below recognised him, and fled the next morning with his family. There were, he told another friend, evil spirits in the house and he could no longer stay there. Uttam Chand was convinced he had gone to the Afghan government. Although Bhagat Ram was less apprehensive, they decided to move back to a *serai* – this time to a slightly classier one generally used by truck drivers. However, Bose's delicate digestion could no longer cope with the rich Pathan food, and he was racked with serious dysentery and severe abdominal pains. The *serai* was the last place for proper care and attention, but as they dared not risk a return to Uttam Chand's house they had to improvise. Bhagat Ram described Bose's symptoms to Chand who communicated them to a local doctor, obtained medicines and arranged for proper food.

By this time Uttam Chand had taken over Bhagat Ram's duties of liaising with Herr Thomas, though the Siemens man could offer little joy. The Reich Foreign Ministry had taken its time to consider Pilger's report, and it was only under pressure from the Italians (who had not been formally approached by Bose) that they hustled into action. The two Axis governments had jointly approached the Russians to allow Bose through their territory (Herr Thomas later told Bhagat Ram that Japan had pitched in as well, and described the issue as 'as important as Lenin's crossing over to Russia with the help of the German government'). The request had been made in

mid-February but the Russians had made no response – their suspicions remained intact.

Bose however, was convinced that Russia would have him, if only he could get through. He was bitter about the fact that the Kirti Party had sent him a guide who had no contacts, and decided it was time he made his own arrangements to travel to the border areas and enter the Soviet Union across the river Oxus. Here again Uttam Chand seemed to have the answers. One of his many contacts was a certain Yakub. An escaped murderer, he lived on the border, having conveniently married into a family of dacoits and smugglers. Cautiously Bhagat Ram opened negotiations with Yakub. He knew such men had no loyalties except to the highest bidder, and that he would have to be careful. Yakub was quite enthusiastic and a tentative programme was drawn up. It was decided to leave on the morning of 23 February.

Bose had written to Pilger about his plans, and the afternoon before the departure Bhagat Ram paid what he thought would be his last courtesy call on Herr Thomas. But now at last a chink of light appeared through the mystifying Axis darkness. Thomas persuaded a reluctant Bhagat Ram to visit the Italian legation, and there he was met by a concerned and interested man named Pietro Quaroni.

Quaroni was probably the most perceptive of the Axis diplomats. Having pressurised his own government to help out on the visa problem, he was now determined to have Bose for the Axis. As his later report to his government put it:

> In the past we have spent big sums of money, for instance, on the press propaganda in the two Americas, with the results we can see today. Here one could work on a much more solid terrain. If what is being attempted should work out even in part probably several months of war, human lives, millions' worth of materials will be saved. Our enemies in all their wars, the present one included, have always largely used the 'revolutionary' weapon with success: why should we not learn from our enemies?

It was dangerous, Quaroni told Talwar, to proceed to the Soviet border on one's own. The Axis governments were doing their best and were quite hopeful. When Bhagat Ram mentioned that the

journey was already arranged, Quaroni asked him to fix a meeting with Bose. For a long time Bhagat Ram, Bose and Uttam Chand discussed Quaroni's proposal. To abandon Yakub now seemed unwise. After weeks of inactivity they seemed at last to be getting somewhere; but, of course, if the Axis really delivered, their chances were much better. And a journey to Berlin or Rome did not eventually rule out Moscow. 'I want you,' Bose told them, 'to drive any such ideas out of your heads. My absolute preference is for Moscow. Only it will be easier to go to Moscow from Berlin or Rome than from here.' After all, Moscow had already rejected him. What guarantee was there that he would be accepted in Yakub's company at the Oxus?

The same evening, the 22nd, Subhas Bose met Pietro Quaroni and talked so far into the night that Quaroni invited him to stay on at the legation. It was the first of many meetings, during the course of which Bose for the first time expressed his views on the coming struggle. A government of Free India should be set up in Europe, he argued. Having obtained a guarantee of the freedom, integrity and independence of India from the Axis powers, it would immediately begin a special radio campaign beamed exclusively to India and it would try and foment revolution there. The help given would, of course, be in the form of a repayable loan, and Bose for his part would broadcast only once he was convinced of the Axis' good faith. Quaroni later reported:

> According to Bose, India is morally ripe for the revolution; what is lacking is the courage to take the first step: the great obstacles to action are on the one side the lack of faith in their own capabilities and on the other the blind persuasion of British excessive power. He says that if 50,000 men – Italian, German or Japanese – could reach the frontiers of India, the Indian army would desert, the masses would uprise and the end of the English domination could be achieved in a very short time. . . . Bose is of the opinion that the main obstacle to the possibilities of a revolution in India is the great fear of England.

Quaroni had already come to the same conclusion. Kabul, they agreed, should be the centre of Bose's organisation in India, and Quaroni urged Bose to ask his followers to turn to sabotage. Bose,

who had not thought of it, agreed to get his revolutionary followers to consider it.

At the end of these discussions Quaroni was fairly bubbling with enthusiasm, and he reported to his minister in Rome:

> If in June, 1940, that is at the time when the defeat of England seemed certain, we had had a ready organisation like the one Bose proposes now it might have been possible. Political and military India is a cornerstone of the British Empire. Last year's chance is gone but a similar one could come this year also. One should be ready to take full advantage of it. To put up this organisation money will be required, probably not a little of it.

About Bose he had no doubts:

> Bose is a type that we all know from his works and his actions. Intelligent, able, full of passion; and without doubt the most realistic, maybe the only realist among the Indian national leaders. . . . What he says about the Indian situation tallies with what one can make out of the very censored Indian press which is a sign that his statements do not sin of optimism and this is a thing in his favour.

Things seemed to be moving in the direction Bose wanted them to; now he ordered suits for himself and bought shoes, some toilet and other travel articles and a suitcase. The Germans and the Italians were trying three different plans: a transit visa through Russia, a diplomatic courier who would arrive in Kabul and be replaced on the return journey by Bose, and possible travel through Iran and Syria. The courier plan looked the best bet and Quaroni advised Bose that they expected someone soon. On 3 March the Soviet government informed the Germans that they were ready to grant a transit visa to Bose, and finally, on the afternoon of 15 March, as Bose was in the middle of his tea, a message arrived that couriers had come and Bose must be ready to leave on the 18th.

There were more photographs, more shopping and a final affectionate farewell for Uttam Chand and his children, whom Bose had come to adore. It was decided that Bhagat Ram, working under the name Rehmat Khan, would be the main link between Bose and

India, the messages being routed through the Italians and the Germans (this, as we shall see, was to cause problems).

Three days later – on the morning of 18 March 1941 – a large car drew up. It contained Dr Wagner (a German engineer), an Italian courier and a European driver. Bose was now Orlando Mazzotta, Italian diplomat. In the cold Afghan air with the dawn still to come, Bose bid Bhagat Ram an affectionate farewell ('he became so sentimental,' Ram recollects, 'that he could not say a word to me while parting') and set off. Compared to his recent journeys this was bliss. A leisurely, dignified car ride to the Russian border, then the train through the historic Asian cities of Bokhara and Samarkand, to Moscow, and finally by air to Berlin.

Quaroni had concluded his report on Bose thus:

> Two things are necessary to make revolution – men and money. We do not have the men to start a revolution in India, but luck has put them in our hands. No matter how difficult Germany's and our monetary situation is, the money that this movement requires is certainly not lacking. It is only a question of valuing the pros and cons and to decide on the risk.

In Moscow Bose again knocked at the Russians' door; they were extremely hospitable but determinedly evasive about helping him. In Berlin the Germans were more receptive. Yet – and this behaviour would characterise his relations with the Germans – delight at the unexpectedness of his arrival did not always translate into practical help for his plans. Quaroni was to remain an exception as much in Kabul as in Berlin.

PART V

CHALO! DELHI!

The time has come when I can openly tell the whole world, including our enemies, as to how it is proposed to bring about the national liberation. Indians outside India, particularly Indians in east Asia, are going to organise a fighting force which will be powerful enough to attack the British Army in India. When we do so, a revolution will break out, not only among the civil population at home, but also among the Indian Army which is now standing under the British flag. When the British government is thus attacked from both sides – from inside India and from outside – it will collapse, and the Indian people will then regain their liberty. According to my plan it is not even necessary to bother about the attitude of the Axis powers towards India. If Indians outside and inside India will do their duty, it is possible for the Indian people to throw the British out of India and liberate 388 millions of their countrymen.

Speech at a mass rally at the Padang
(in front of the municipal offices),
Singapore, 9 July 1943

16

THE GERMAN INTERLUDE

On 20 April 1942 Bose broadcast from Berlin. After declaring that he was not an apologist for the Axis, he continued:

> Britain's paid propagandists have been calling me an enemy agent. I need no credentials when I speak to my own people. My whole life is one long persistent, uncompromising struggle against British imperialism, and it is the best guarantee of my bona fides. . . . All my life I have been the servant of India. Until the last hour of my life I shall remain one. My allegiance and loyalty have ever been and will ever be to India alone, no matter in which part of the world I may live.

In other broadcasts and public statements he would ask whether it was just conceivable that the Axis powers had deceived him, only to conclude that, if the British politicians, 'universally admitted' to be the 'cleverest and the most cunning', had been unable to deceive him, no other politicians in the world could hope to succeed. This in essence formed Bose's justification for his decision to work with the Nazis and then with the Japanese.

Within a week of the fall of Paris he had speculated about the division of spoils between Germany and Russia, and with extraordinary accuracy predicted the likely geographical demarcations. Bose was convinced that Germany would want a free hand on the continent except in the Balkans, and that Italy would impose its will

in the Mediterranean. The Balkans and the Middle East would be Russia's, Africa would be shared by all, and Japan's help might be enlisted to carve up the British Empire. As Bose was making his predictions, von Ribbentrop was trying to get the Soviet Union to join the Continental Bloc and agree to spheres of influence very similar to these. But where, Bose wondered, would such a robbers' feast leave India?

This likely share-out between the conquering powers greatly worried him, and was one of the reasons he later gave his European associates for his decision to leave India. He was convinced that Jinnah was preparing to partition the country, and – crucially – he believed that at least one important Indian leader should be present at the peace negotiations which he thought would follow the ending of the war and where the vanquished (Britain) would bargain with the victor, but not totally surrender. Bose had read the history of the First World War thoroughly, and knew that one of Britain's trump cards at Versailles had been that no representative Indian leader had raised the banner of revolt. The various Indian overseas efforts had been the work of exiled Indians, out of touch with conditions in India, and Britain had easily brushed them aside.

The problem is that Bose never denounced war-time Nazism as he saw it develop round him. He never took the broad view that the Nazi evil arose from the evil he fought: imperialism. Nazism was its final, absolute re-incarnation. He did not see this – or, even if he did, he did not think it was his business to say so. This dangerous myopia flowed naturally from his notion, which over-rode all other considerations, of the good of India. Everything was directed to this supreme national aim. In this Bose was not unique; his behaviour was characteristically Indian. George Orwell wondered during the war whether any Indian could be a reliable anti-fascist. Bose had long ago decided that 'My enemy's enemy is my friend'.

This very thing should have made his arrival a sensation in Germany. During the First World War, Germany had been an active and welcome centre for Indians opposed to the Raj. But, on Hitler's rise to power, Indians were quickly made aware that they were not welcome. By the time Bose arrived there were only some thirty-nine Indians registered in Germany – most of them students or working in industry and commerce, and none of them political activists. India for the German government was a useful land-mass

with which to bargain in its negotiations with Japan and the Soviet Union.

On 27 September 1940 a tripartite pact had been signed by Germany, Japan and Italy, and India had been assigned to the Russian sphere of influence. Japan had been gravely perturbed by the Nazi–Soviet pact. A section of the Japanese army was strongly anti-Soviet and had long been insisting on a 'strike north' war against Russia as part of Japan's imperial plans. But as the opposing 'strike south' faction of the army, wanting to attack Britain in east Asia and America in the Pacific, gained power, and Japan's relations with the Soviet Union improved, India appeared to both Germany and Japan as a tempting enough bait to offer the Soviet Union. It would still leave many other countries free for German and Japanese New Order plans. But during his decisive visit to Germany in November 1940, Molotov, the Russian Foreign Minister, was more concerned about Russia's traditional spheres of influence in Europe, and was openly sceptical of German aims and policies. Hitler, who had at last met his match, was furious, and decided that Germany must attack Russia.

In the complex scheming that went on between the four, India was often assigned different roles. On 6 January 1940 General Jodl, Chief of the German high command (OKW) had prepared a paper arguing for joint German–Soviet action in Afghanistan and India. Later these plans developed further, and by 30 June 1940 Jodl had provided for direct action against India and Afghanistan.

The Germans had in fact been active in Afghanistan since the end of the First World War. With Soviet help they had tried to restore the deposed King Amanullah, who was considered to be reliably anti-British, but this scheme had come to grief in the complex rivalry between the foreign-policy bureau of the Nazi party, the government officials at Wilhelmstrasse (the Foreign Ministry), and the Abwehr (the secret service). One strategist planned to use the tribes of the north-west frontier to harass the British, and the impossible Faqir of Ipi was lavishly financed (at one stage at the rate of £10,000 per month) to tie down British troops.

Afghanistan in turn had its own designs on parts of India, and was willing to join Germany provided she helped her get a piece of India and guaranteed that the Soviet Union would respect Afghan territory. But all these plans came up against one rock: Adolf Hitler. He,

as David Irving has shown, was in fact a secret and avid British sympathiser. For him the British and their empire were the epitome of all that was noble and glorious in the Nordic races. It was, he thought, in the Ukraine that the German Raj would arise. Before the war he had often offered to guarantee the empire, during the war he renewed the proposal several times, and David Irving in *Hitler's War* quotes many examples to prove Hitler's regard for the British Empire. India's freedom fighters were, of course 'Asiatic jugglers' who could never overwhelm the Raj. But, though Bose meant little to the Fuhrer, his arrival was electrifying news for the 'petty county squires' of Wilhelmstrasse (as Hitler described them).

Bose arrived in Berlin on 2 April 1941. The next day he met the director of the political department, Dr Woermann, and quickly developed his arguments. He wanted to set up an Indian government-in-exile, as the Poles and others had done in London; he would require certain promises from the Axis powers, and they must be prepared to help with propaganda, instigate uprisings in India and eventually invade the country. All that were required to free India, Bose argued, were 100,000 men with modern equipment. Woermann, however, was not buying. 'I maintained a purely non-committal attitude on this point,' he recorded later. This stonewalling soon became the standard German response to Bose's plans and ideas throughout his years in Germany: 'We shall have to consider, we shall have to wait and see'; and finally, 'The Fuhrer knows best: he will decide'.

On other matters Woermann was more helpful. Bose was provided with small sums of money from the ministry's personnel department, and his long-term finance was planned. Since the Afghan government did not know of his stay in Kabul it was decided that the route of his escape would not be disclosed, but Woermann wanted Bose's arrival to be announced publicly the following week with appropriate ceremony. Bose in turn told Woermann that he hoped to submit his programme in the next few days.

Six days later Bose submitted his first memorandum to the German government. In Europe he wanted a Free Indian government to be set up, and a treaty signed governing its relationship with the Axis powers. If the Axis won, Bose was prepared to provide them with 'special facilities' in India. He also wanted Free

Indian government legations established in friendly countries, intensive propaganda through the radio and, above all, practical help for India – arms, agents, etc., sent through Afghanistan and the tribal areas.

Almost ten months before Japan entered the war he visualised a Japanese victory.

> The overthrow of British power in India can, in its last stages, be materially assisted by Japanese foreign policy in the Far East. If Japan decides on expansion southwards it will lead to an open clash with Great Britain. If war then breaks out it appears more certain that the East Indies and the Far Eastern squadrons of the British navy will, under the present circumstances, be no match for the Japanese navy and even if America comes to the rescue of the British navy, a Japanese victory could still be hoped for. A defeat of the British navy in the Far East, including the smashing up of the Singapore base, will automatically weaken British military strength and prestige in India. India is, therefore, intensely interested in the developments in the Far East. And since Japanese expansion southwards necessitates a prior agreement between the Soviet Union and Japan, India is greatly interested in a pact which will, on the one hand, expedite a settlement of the China affair and will, on the other, enable Japan to move more freely and confidently towards the South.

The Germans reacted cautiously to his proposals. They were prepared to help organise radio propaganda, but an actual Free Indian government was asking for too much. Woermann minuted this reaction:

> 1) Compliance with Bose's plan would mean that we would announce the liberation of India from English rule as a war aim. It is doubtful whether the moment has arrived for doing this in an official form.
> 2) The establishment of a Free Indian government in Berlin, under Bose's leadership, would mean that we make a certain political group, namely, the leftist Forward Bloc, the exponent of India. This group is in opposition to other recognised Indian leaders such as Gandhi and Pandit Nehru. There would hardly be

any direct government benefit, whereas this would meet with an unfavourable response in large parts of India.

Woermann, a good civil servant, had also found other flaws in Bose's arguments. Bose had started by saying in their first interview that 100,000 modern soldiers would deal with the 70,000-strong British component of the Indian Army (the Indian component, Bose argued, would instantly revolt). The following week, in his memo, Bose reduced the strength of the national British force to half without any explanation. Worse, he wanted, quite illogically, to remain incognito as His Excellency Orlando Mazzotta. Who had ever heard, the Germans asked scornfully, of His Excellency Orlando Mazzotta, travelling on an Italian passport, heading a Free Indian government in Berlin?

Bose's reasons for not wanting to disclose his identity are interesting. If the Germans accepted his government-in-exile plans he would, as Woermann noted, 'remain in Germany during the war and carry on his fight from here'. But if they did not, 'he intended to go to the Indian border and fight from there'; in that case, disclosing that he had been to Germany would be a grave disadvantage.

On 29 April 1941 Bose met von Ribbentrop at the Hotel Imperial in Vienna. Bose found von Ribbentrop at his Nazi bombastic height: the war was all but won, England was finished, the Führer had often tried to make peace with Britain on the terms of 'let Germany rule Europe and we will let you have your empire'; 'in her arrogance and stupidity, however, England had rejected the Führer's hand'. When Bose said that Indians feared that, though the English might accept defeat, they would try to regain lost terrain, particularly India, von Ribbentrop was confident that 'the English had gone too far and it would all be over with them this time'.

On the wider political questions that concerned Bose, von Ribbentrop had little to offer. Disruptive activities were fine, but a declaration of Indian independence guaranteed by the Axis was a different matter. Even when Bose argued that Indian prisoners of war being captured in increasing numbers in Africa could be used as a strike force, von Ribbentrop refused to rise to the bait. This was probably the first time Bose had thought of this; and von Ribbentrop was more interested in telling him about the Führer's great plans for Europe. He was also keen to warn Bose not to

antagonise Gandhi. Though Bose reassured him that, contrary to British propaganda, the country would not fall apart if the British left, that it contained a well-developed political organisation – his own – and that the moment for action had come, von Ribbentrop, like Woermann, was non-committal.

Perhaps the most interesting exchange between the two men took place when von Ribbentrop asked Bose about how India felt towards Germany. 'Bose answered that he wanted to admit in all frankness that feeling against the National Socialists and the fascists had been rather strong in India. For the English and the communist propaganda had upheld the thesis that National Socialism and fascism were striving to dominate the other races. The Foreign Minister interjected at this point that National Socialism merely advocated racial purity, but not its own rule over other races. Racial purity was also valued in India and conformed moreover, to the laws of nature.'

Though von Ribbentrop avoided political commitments, he was generous with money. Within a few days he sanctioned one million Reichsmarks for propaganda against the Raj, granted Bose a personal allowance of 12,000 Reichsmarks and found him quarters in Berlin. But he still remained Orlando Mazzotta – it was too soon to reveal his identity. Bose pressed on with his plans for a German declaration on Free India – an objective which he never deserted during his two years in Germany, and one which he never achieved.

After meeting von Ribbentrop Bose was back in Berlin seeing Woermann with a 'supplementary memorandum'. Rommel was sweeping through Africa, and even as Bose wrote he heard over the radio of the anti-British coup in Iraq and the British response. He recognised that setting up a Free India government-in-exile would be difficult, but felt that a declaration on India was a must. 'I therefore request: 1) That an early pronouncement be made regarding the freedom of India and the Arab contries.' Germany must help revolts in these countries; attack India – the heart of the British Empire; overthrow the pro-British Afghan government; and help the Iraqi government. If all this was done Germany would have a string of friendly countries 'from North Africa on the one side and right up to Japan in the Far East'. This would become all the more important if Germany were in conflict with Turkey or the Soviet Union.

If she did not secure her ties with the oriental countries, yet still went to war with the Soviet Union, 'Germany will probably lose the sympathy of the oriental countries which she has gained because of her fight against British imperialism'.|Not that Bose wanted Germany to fight the Soviet Union. The Soviet–German pact was still the linchpin of his strategy. 'For the success of the task of exterminating British power and influence from the countries of the Near and the Middle East, it is desirable that the *status-quo* between Germany and the Soviet Union should be maintained.'

With this memorandum Bose was able to prise open the German official door just a bit. On 10 May Woermann noted that a declaration on India had been cleared by Hitler. It would be issued within eight or ten days, and Bose would be consulted. By 19 May a draft declaration was floating around. It was not quite what Bose wanted, but it seemed a first step. It remained, however, the last. The draft endlessly kicked around in Wilhelmstrasse; words were added, words were subtracted, words were changed, but it was never issued. Hitler would never agree, not even when Mussolini pressed him. On 24 May Woermann informed Bose that it would have to be postponed. But, Woermann added, the Germans would help him set up a Free India office to be centrally operated from Berlin.

Nor was life for Orlando Mazzotta in Nazi Germany easy: Bose was up against the master-race outlook. It was only after Foreign Office representations that he was addressed as 'Your Excellency' and given the status of a notable and guest of the government. However, even this was due to a very lucky break; for Bose had landed among the Germans who were the most fervent anti-Nazis.

Some three months before Bose had arrived in Germany, while he was still in Kabul, the German Foreign Office had on its own begun to think about India. The Germans were not doing enough, concluded some of the officials. Bose's arrival intensified these doubts, and the Germans responded by first forming the Arbeitskreis Indien (India Working Group), which a few months later was enlarged into the Special India Department. It came under the charge of State Secretary Wilhelm Keppler, whose only qualification for the job was that he was an old Nazi-party hack. But the department included, among others, Adam von Trott, Dr Alexander Werth and Franz Josef Furtwängler. By the summer of 1941 it

possessed the nucleus of an organisation – but, more crucially, von Trott, Furtwängler and Werth were all dedicated anti-Nazis trying to remove Hitler; none more so than Adam von Trott.

Von Trott's life is now firmly established as a final vindication of the European Right. In the years after the war, as the Right struggled to distinguish itself from fascism and Nazism, with which it was constantly identified, von Trott's life was an example and an inspiration: one of the 'good Germans' who had fought and died so that Germany and Europe might live. Curiously, the von Trott eulogy is a bit like the one parroted by Bose's hero-worshipping supporters; suffocating and almost a self-parody. For instance, the Collins blurb-writer for Chrisopher Sykes' biography of von Trott pictured the German as a medieval romantic, living a life whose theme was like Beethoven's 'Leonora' overture.

Life for von Trott could never have been easy, if his biographer is to be believed. It was often dangerous: balancing his outward support for the regime against his secret plots to overthrow it. Always a complex person, he sympathised with Bose's aims but did not warm to him. Sykes has provided us with Adam's side of this relationship in some detail. He admitted Bose's brilliance, but recorded that 'our personal relationship remains decidedly cool. At every meeting we have to start right at the beginning.' Bose, he concluded, was too negative; there could be no proper interaction.

However, Sykes' portrayal of this relationship must be treated with care. Though he is keen to emphasise that he started off with no initial prejudice against Bose, his whole chapter on him reeks of a venom that would do justice to Francis Tuker and the other Raj warriors. Sykes gets many facts about Bose wrong, including, amazingly, those relating to his period in Germany; seems keen to accept almost every conceivable anti-Bose view; and in the end produces a judgement that is historically absurd.

We do not, of course, have Bose's view of his relationship with von Trott; but, when Bose finally left Germany, Adam von Trott did not come to bid him goodbye.

With the other two important members of the group Bose's relationships were more straightforward. Werth, whose anti-Nazism had been expressed more openly than that of his friend von Trott (he had spent some time in a concentration camp and been an exile in England for six years) became a firm friend and remained so

till the end; after the war he did much to investigate Bose's activities. Franz Josef Furtwängler moved in exactly the opposite direction. A Social Democrat, he gave the impression that he knew more about India than Bose. Subhas, not surprisingly, resented this.

But despite these personal problems von Trott and his group shielded Bose from contact with the racial lords of the Nazi party, concealed German ignorance about India and vastly improved the quality of his life in Germany. With von Ribbentrop happy to guide the Special India Department via an annual teleprinter message from his special train in Westphalia, its officials had plenty of room for manoeuvre. But they could not make policy, and by the end of May, Bose was disillusioned by the response to his lengthy and eloquent presentation of the Indian case. Alexander Werth, working with him, began to detect 'extreme agitation'. But just then Mussolini invited him to Italy.

Despite the help given by Quaroni and the Italian legation, Mussolini had been unaware of Bose's presence till von Ribbentrop told him on 14 May. Von Ribbentrop, however, was extremely reluctant to let him go to Rome. Bose's identity and arrival in Berlin were still a secret, known only to a select few, and Italy was well-known as a sieve which could retain few political secrets. Also, the thought that Mussolini would receive Bose before Hitler would was not comforting. But eventually, on 29 May, the Germans agreed, and early in June Bose flew to Rome. The Italians were friendlier but, as usual, vague. Ciano, who had never liked Bose, noted in his diary: 'He would like the Axis to make a declaration on the independence of India, but in Berlin his proposals have been received with a great deal of reserve. Nor must we be compromised, especially because the value of this upstart is not clear. Past experience has given rather modest results.' Ciano kept him virtually under house arrest and Bose found that, as with many of his colleagues back home, it was mostly talk and no action.

The Rome visit was more important for two other reasons. There had been some discussion among the Germans about getting someone to spy on Bose, and Bismarck, the German ambassador to Rome, made a helpful suggestion to Berlin: why not use the woman who was accompanying him on the trip, Emilie Schenkl. No, said a horrified Berlin, knowing better. Subhas was the last person Emilie would spy on. They were in love and would soon be married.

Subhas Chandra Bose, Berlin, 1941

Bose's mother, Prabhavati

Bose at his house just after his release from Mandalay Prison, 1927

Bose (second from right) at Shillong in 1927 with his father, Jankinath, and Sarat Bose and his wife

Bose alighting from a car behind Sardar Patel to attend a Congress meeting, 15 August 1928

Bose (far right) at the deathbed of V.J. Patel, Geneva, 1933

signed portrait of Bose, Vienna, 1934

Emilie Schenkl, Bose's wife, and their daughter Anita

(Left to right) A.C.N. Nambiar, Heddy Fullop-Miller, Bose, Amiya Bose and Emilie Schenkl,

Bose, President of the Forward Bloc, Madras, 21 January 1940

As a Bose now President, fanned by relations on the day of the Tripuri Congress, [illegible]

Bose at an I.N.A. rally

The relationship is shrouded in myth and legend. There can be little doubt that Subhas and Emilie lived as husband and wife (having probably first done so in Vienna in 1933) or that Subhas fathered a child. Just before he left Germany for the East he wrote to Mejdada informing him of the marriage and pleading, 'When I shall be no more, please offer a little of your affection to my wife and daughter – as you have shown me all along.' The marriage is disputed (the letter, one close relation has alleged, is a forgery); it divides the Bose family and continues to outrage the more uncritical of Bose's supporters. For them the very thought of Bose marrying anyone – let along a white foreigner – is sacrilegious. After all, did he not vow not to marry until India was free? It is the accepted belief even in certain sophisticated Indian circles that an Indian marrying a white woman must necessarily have been duped by her wiles. Popular mythology consoles itself with the belief that the bedsitters of the West are perpetually stocked with nubile white females hiding in closets eager to trap rich but unwary Indian males. For such supporters to accept Emilie Schenkl is to believe that Bose, leader of men and putative conqueror of the British, fell to tricks that should not have defeated an undergraduate.

Bose's attitude to women lends credence to the popular theory that he was inclined towards celibacy. Yet there is nothing to suggest that he vowed never to marry till India was free. Basanti Devi was one of those who often joked about this with him: he would parry, never reject. Certainly there were plenty of opportunities for him to marry in India. A handsome, attractive man, his choice was limitless – but for some reason he chose to wait for Emilie.

There have been conflicting versions of the marriage ceremony. According to Abid Hasan, who was one of his close assistants, it was a *gandharva* ceremony of exchanging garlands – the simplest Hindu rite; but Girija Mookerjee, another co-worker in Germany, claims to have seen a marriage certificate with von Trott's signature as witness. But whatever the exact form of their union, Subhas thought of Emilie with great tenderness and love. As he prepared to leave Germany (the trip was later postponed) he wrote asking his friend Kommerzialrat Otto Faltis to look after her and the child she was carrying. Though their life together was not very long (from April 1941 to September 1942) it had all the qualities of a fairly

ordered domestic existence, and Emilie would later tell Subhas' relations fascinating tales of pure domestic bliss. By June 1942 it had become necessary to take Emilie to Vienna, and in November 1942 Anita was born. Subhas, Emilie and Anita had just one Christmas together.

Emilie plays a very small part in our story, but a brief sketch of her subsequent life is instructive. She was given a job at Faltis' Vienna office. As the war progressed, life in Vienna became increasingly difficult. Her sufferings and the scenes of destruction around her made her into a pacifist. After Indian independence there was some talk of giving her an Indian passport. Sarat met her and was said to have been impressed by Subhas' choice, efforts were made to organise financial help. But she has never visited India, though Anita did make a brief visit in 1961.

It was in Rome on 22 June 1941 that Bose was to hear the news that blasted away one of the linchpins of his strategy. Hitler had invaded Russia. Now there was little point in returning to Berlin, and he decided to travel to Vienna. On 17 July he returned to Berlin, met Woermann, and told him, according to the official minutes: 'The Soviets had been popular in India especially among the intellectuals from whom the leaders are drawn. It is believed in India that the Soviet Union is an anti-imperialist power and would therefore be an Indian ally against England. . . . In the German–Russian war the sympathies of the Indian people were clearly with Russia because the Indian people felt definitely that Germany was the aggressor and was for India, therefore, another dangerous imperialist power.' In Nazi Germany nobody dared say such things, not even privately to government officials. But, as the Germans had already realised, Bose was not like the sycophantic rabble that usually gathered round them. Woermann, however, thought a spot of brainwashing was in order. He minuted, 'It is clear from his statement that Bose being far from Berlin is strongly influenced by the Soviet thesis on the question of the German–Russian conflict; it will therefore be our first task to put him right in this respect.' It was a task in which the Germans were destined to fail.

A few days later a German writer, Dr Giselher Wirsing, visited Bose in his Berlin hotel and 'found him sitting, cross-legged in front of a large world map, wrapped in thought. I sat quietly next to him and could easily read his thoughts. A few days ago Hitler had begun

the campaign against Soviet Russia. Bose finally broke the silence and said, "That won't be good".'

Right through the war Bose steadfastly refused to join any Nazi condemnation of the Soviet Union. He appears to have got round this by never referring to the Russians in his broadcasts, as George Orwell shrewdly noted. But it was not quite that easy to cope with the consequences that Hitler's invasion of Russia had on his developing underground links in India. Though these links remained, they became terribly complicated, and even today it is a field in which a researcher can very easily lose himself.

During one of his discussions with the Germans and the Italians in Kabul, Bose had told them that Bhagat Ram Talwar would be their link with India. Later it was agreed he would return to Kabul with two reliable men – one of them from among Bose's revolutionary supporters in Bengal – and have them trained in sabotage techniques and wireless work. This Talwar did, bringing with him Sodhi Mohinder Singh and Santimoy Ganguli. The Germans had a special man in Afghanistan for Indian work, Rasmuss, and Talwar and Bose exchanged messages.

At the heart of the subsequent complication lies the response of the Indian communists to Russia's entry into the war. Till June 1941 the Indian communists, following the Soviet view, had classified the war as an 'imperialist' war with which they would have nothing to do. June 1941 changed all that. Communists all over the world immediately joined the war effort – it was now a 'people's war'. The Indian communists vacillated for a time, but then, prompted by the British Communist Party, finally agreed. The British government promptly lifted its ban on them, and the communists found themselves able to operate openly for the first time since the party had been founded in the early twenties.

Towards Bose the party line seemed clear. He was a quisling, a fascist hyena, a jackal of Nazism, an opportunist out to grab power by riding on the backs of his Nazi and Japanese masters. Till recently this attitude has marked the divide between Bose and the communists. Talwar's Kirti Party had merged with the mainstream Indian communists in 1942, and that year all contact with Bose and Talwar was supposed to have ended; the communists after all could not very well help a man who was a guest of the country ravaging and destroying Russia. But Talwar, in a recent memoir, says that

contact was maintained right till the end of the war with the active help and encouragement of the highest political leadership of the Indian communists – the very men who were publicly picturing Bose in cartoons, for instance, as a donkey being ridden by a bloodthirsty Japanese general, a rat being held by Goebbels while Hitler smirked and Bose declared, 'I am bringing freedom to India', or as a fat, tame 'Marshal' Bose being led by an evilly grinning Tojo.

Talwar says he went back to Kabul in August, September and December 1941 to meet Rasmuss, other Germans and the Italians. They discussed various plans, including German parachute drops and plans for an airstrip in the tribal areas. Messages were exchanged with Bose, who in December 1941 advised against sabotage or armed struggle and urged careful co-ordination between the external and internal struggles.

By then the debate among the Indian communists was at its height. Bhagat Ram did not contact the higher party leadership. It was only in June 1942 that he finally met the leader of his own party, Teja Singh Swatantra, who had already merged the Kirti with the main Indian Communist Party. It is not clear if Swatantra already knew what Talwar was up to or came to know of it at the June meeting. In any case, they decided to travel to Bombay to discuss matters with the CPI top leadership. An agonised debate followed.

Finally, it was decided that the contact should be maintained. Bhagat Ram Talwar resumed his one-man shuttle service between Rasmuss and other Germans in Kabul and Swatantra in Delhi, and later, when the political and military situation became more acute, with Dr Adhikari of the CPI Politbureau in Bombay. Periodically he would receive detailed questionnaires from Bose: how are the broadcasts received? what is the influence of this or that political figure? and detailed instructions about what was to be done. When Bose went to Japan, Bhagat Ram was introduced by Rasmuss to Inoye, his counterpart in the Japanese embassy at Kabul, and Talwar says he continued his contacts with Bose till the end of the war.

Occasionally, when Bhagat Ram needed rest, another courier took his place, and towards the end there seems to have been direct radio contact between Swatantra and Bose (Talwar is infuriatingly ambiguous about this). All this completely wrecks the story so painstakingly built up by the communists themselves about their relations with Bose, posing several questions and exposing them to

the charge they were always so quick to hurl against Bose: opportunism. If Talwar is to be believed, the communists, while publicly attacking Bose mercilessly, privately co-operated with him, collected information for him and helped him, knowing it meant indirect and in some cases direct help to their mortal enemy, Germany.

When I asked Adhikari about this, he admitted that the communists 'played a double game'. But it was a moment of great crisis and risks had to be taken, even though ideological contradictions arose in the process. In any case, they had a commitment to Bose, and 'information was coming'. All they had to do was to send someone to collect it. It would enable them to know what the fascists were doing. 'Our plan was,' continued Adhikari, 'to do nothing on the information received. Talwar was a courier, merely carrying information to Bose. We were keeping ourselves informed about what was happening, that's all.'

But was it so simple? Such a double game involves many risks and carries the charge that the information was eventually passed on to the British. For many of Bose's non-communist revolutionaries the charge is already proved. Santimoy Ganguli travelled to Lahore three times after his initial trip with Bhagat Ram. On all three occasions Talwar was away, for reasons Ganguli never understood. He found the people hospitable but politically unenthusiastic. Russia was now in the war and they could no longer help Bose. On his third trip, in January 1942, Ganguli was told that their collaboration must end, though he was promised that there would be no disclosure. Soon after this Sodhi was arrested at the Delhi railway station and almost immediately the British broke the back of Bose's underground organisation. Most of the important revolutionary leaders of Bengal were arrested (Ganguli was interned in November 1942), Uttam Chand was given forty-eight hours to leave Afghanistan and immediately arrested on arrival in India, and Abad Khan soon followed. Interestingly, by June 1942, when Bhagat Ram decided to meet his leader Swatantra, almost all the people who had helped him and Bose were under arrest. Talwar alone survived, freely moving back and forth from Kabul to Lahore, to Delhi, to Bombay and back. Sodhi's testimony, Ganguli maintains, implicated other people; Uttam Chand led to Abad Khan, who in his long interrogation spoke bitterly about Bhagat Ram. Talwar figured in all three men's lists, yet till the end of the

war he remained free. Even when we have allowed for Talwar's extraordinary brilliance at deception we are left with some doubts. After Russia's entry into the war the Russian and British agents compared notes, and Russia presumably informed Britain about its role in getting Bose through. Bhagat Ram Talwar must have figured there too, yet he was allowed to operate freely.

This leniency must be judged against the file that Soli Batlivala, a prominent member of the Communist Party, found quite accidentally one afternoon. One day in 1943 Batlivala was summoned by P.C. Joshi and asked to travel immediately to Delhi and meet the army high command to arrange communist-sponsored arts programmes in the fighting zones. Batlivala decided to examine the relevant file. But, as luck would have it, that evening the filing clerk had planned to go to a film. He handed Soli the keys of the cupboard and hurried away. Batlivala pulled out some files from the top row. It was only after he had read a fair bit of the first letter that he realised he had both pulled out the wrong file and unearthed explosive material. It contained incredible correspondence between Joshi and Sir Reginald Maxwell, the British Home Secretary. In it Joshi promised all help to the Raj in hunting the 'traitor' Bose and his fifth-column agents. Batlivala burst into Joshi's room and immediately demanded a meeting of the Central Committee. After Joshi had got over his initial surprise, he procrastinated. Batlivala himself left the party over another issue, and the file was forgotten.

Did the Indian communists act as British agents and spy on Bose through Talwar? The record is so murky that a clear answer is impossible. But one point needs to be stressed. Talwar's revelations have come in the middle of communist attempts to re-assess their wartime opinion about Subhas Bose. Their slander of Bose as a traitor and their opposition to the 1942 Quit India movement led them away from the nationalist mainstream and revived the old charge that communists were agents of foreign powers. In independent India, proud of its nationalism, this has been a heavy cross to bear, and periodically the communists have been called to answer accusations of having betrayed the national movement. Struggling to explain the colossal failure of their movement in India, some are now prepared to admit they were wrong about Subhas. During Bose's 1978 birthday celebrations Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of Marxist Bengal, called for a new communist appraisal

of Bose, and the Russians and the East Germans now allow that Bose, far from being a fascist hyena was basically a nationalist, if somewhat misled.

The trip to Rome had not improved Bose's position in Germany, and hospitality could also bring humiliation. In Rome, as Woermann had instructed the German embassy, Bose had been provided with funds, and von Trott had helped him buy much-needed clothes. But when the accounts were submitted Keppler questioned every Reichsmark spent and Bose was once again reminded of his precarious status in Germany.

At the level of von Trott and the officials there had been some progress. Bose returned to Berlin to find that the India Working Group had become the Special India Department, and that von Trott, Furtwängler and Werth were now assisted by a variety of specialists who, like missionaries approaching their first country, had feverishly set to work collating information, pursuing ideas and always thinking of ways Bose and the Indian independence movement could be furthered. Preparations also went ahead for a Free India Centre; but on the one question that 'greatly excited' Bose, as Woermann put it, there was no movement. Hitler still refused to consent to a declaration on Free India. When Bose met Woermann, the German recited the old song: the time had not yet come. However, Woermann did veto the idea of the German embassy in Rome that Bose should be taken to a neutral country and kept in mothballs till that favourable moment arrived. So Bose lived in a succession of Berlin hotels, stayed in contact with von Trott and his friends and watched with increasing impatience the developing world situation: much of which he acutely analysed, none of which he could influence.

The Germans, however, did do something on the propaganda front. A few days after Bose's meeting with von Ribbentrop in Vienna in April 1941, the German Foreign Minister had inquired about radio propaganda to India. By 5 May an official of the Rundfunkstelle – the German Foreign Office broadcasting bureau – had drawn up an elaborate eight-page plan. India, the official concluded, had over 120,000 sets – 30,000 of them short-wave and mostly owned by people who were strongly nationalistic and pro-German. The broadcasts should be aimed at them and be in Hindustani, Bengali, Telugu and Tamil, most of the major Indian

languages. Von Ribbentrop himself was in favour of Bose's idea of clandestine medium-wave broadcasting from the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier Province, or even from Kabul Radio, which had been constructed with German help. Not that they were short of radio stations in the East: Bangkok, Saigon, and even Chungking were possible places, and in Shanghai there was a short-wave German radio whose power was soon to be increased from one to five kilowatts. Perhaps the most interesting idea was to set up a 'black' transmitter in the Dutch station of Huizen and pretend the broadcasts were being made from India. Radio propaganda by itself could not bring about rebellion, von Ribbentrop concluded, but it could foment discontent – and that was a beginning.

Also, by October plans for opening a Free India Centre had progressed; but here the Italians had set the pace, and the Germans, not wanting to be left behind, had followed. On 4 October 1941 the Italian Foreign Ministry informed the German embassy that it had allocated a floor of a Foreign Ministry building to set up what came to be called the Centro India, headed by one Mohammed Iqbal Schedai. This forms perhaps one of the least-known aspects of German and Italian wartime efforts to aid Indian revolutionaries – and undoubtedly the most curious. Little is know about Schedai except what has been gleaned from Italian and German documents. Born in 1898, a year after Bose, he had been involved in communist activities in his youth, and was expelled from France in 1938 when he decided to work under the tutelage of Mussolini, who, acting as the self-proclaimed protector of all followers of Islam, was happy to become his patron.

Schedai will not figure prominently in our story, but during the next year – till November 1942 – his activities rivalled those of Bose, and the two men had a stormy, controversial relationship. Bose saw in Schedai the personification of the growing Muslim separatist tendency which he had feared ever since his last meeting with Jinnah in India. Schedai's Azad Hindustan organisation consisted entirely of Muslims, including a relative of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and a former Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, close to ex-King Amanullah. Himalay Radio, which now began broadcasting from Rome (pretending to broadcast from India), vituperatively denounced Gandhi and Nehru and increasingly argued a separatist 'Pakistan' line. (Schedai also wrote curious letters: once to the

Japanese consul in Rome, 'I am lazy'; again, to the German consul in Rome, 'From six in the morning till five in the evening I am busy and in the evening my head does not work'.)

Anxious to promote his own cause, Schedai missed no opportunity to attack Bose. He had visited Germany in September and criticised much of the German work, blaming it on 'His Excellency Mazzotta' and his 'dictatorial' ambitions. He had been scathing about the way the Indian POWs were being treated in the Annaburg training camp near Dresden in Saxony; and, when Bose and von Trott tried to persuade him to come and work in Berlin, he set his own conditions. He wanted an Axis declaration on Free India, Rome's permission to transfer his activities, and a joint 'Italo–German–Indian Committee'. Bose, who thought committee work would produce only waffle, shot the idea down. Schedai was unable even to present the idea to the Germans, and refused to leave Rome. However, with the Italians keen to get in on the India act, he was able to prosper – but only for a time. At the risk of getting ahead of ourselves, we must give here a brief summary of how Schedai's career ended.

By June 1942 he had persuaded the Italians to revive the Amici dell' India – Friends of India – and publish a magazine called *Italia e India*. He was also able to act in the military sphere, using the idea Bose had given von Ribbentrop at their April meeting in Vienna. The Italians had captured the first Indian POWs to fall into Axis hands during their north African campaign, and by 1 June 1942 Schedai had enlisted forty volunteers from various Italian POW camps. In July, with two of his most able volunteers, he went on a tour of camps in north Africa and recruited a few hundred more. By August 1942 the Centro Militare India, as the Italian–Indian war effort was called, could boast two companies of volunteers under an Italian commander, Major Avrea. Originally the Italian plan seems to have been to assemble fifty to eighty Indian POWs and to select about twenty of them for sabotage activities in India. By October 1942 there were 250 of them in Torre Muara, north Africa, and a further fifty were receiving parachute training. The Italians were learning quickly from the German example; but in November 1942 it all came to an end. Rumours swept the Torre Muara camp that the Indians were about to be sent back to Libya to help deal with Allied landings there, and on 9 November the camp mutinied. Schedai

was completely discredited, the Centro Militare was dissolved and Bose, who on his frequent trips to Italy had often warned the Italians about Schedai's amateurish efforts, was completely vindicated.

Little is known of what happened to Schedai after that; but from the beginning the Italian effort had unwittingly succeeded in goading the Germans into action. Soon after the Italians set up their Centro India, von Trott visited Rome to discover their plans. He came back with an agreement wherein both sides agreed to co-ordinate their Indian activities, though this, like all Axis agreements, was rarely implemented. There followed a remarkable speeding-up of the German effort. On 30 October 1941 the Free India Centre – Zentralstelle Freie Indien – was opened at 10 Lichtensteinallee in the Tiergarten district of central Berlin, and three days later Bose formally opened it with a short but characteristic speech.

By the time the meeting ended many of Bose's pet schemes had taken shape. For years Indian nationalists had squabbled about the right greeting to be used amongst themselves, the appropriate national anthem, the common language – and had divided along caste, religious and sectarian lines. In that Berlin suburb Bose got everybody to accept 'Jai Hind' ('Hail to India') as the national greeting, 'Jana Gana Mana', Tagore's song for India, as the national anthem, and Hindustani written in Roman script as the national language: decisions the first two of which free India would eventually accept.

One other decision was taken. Bose was no longer Bose but Netaji ('Leader', or, as the Germans often interpreted it, *Führer*). Later Sivaram, a member of Bose's propaganda team in south-east Asia, said that he deliberately cultivated this title, but in Germany, for the small band of Indians he had collected, it was sincerely meant. As one hero-worshipper later put it, 'those in Berlin felt a bit uneasy in using the common name for the towering personality and outstanding figure of Subhas Bose. It was therefore quite in keeping with our usual way of paying homage to a person of acknowledged greatness to decide to call him from that day onwards Netaji, the 'Leader'.'

And Netaji had at last found a home in Berlin. The Germans allocated to him 6–7 Sophientstrasse, a luxurious house in the fashionable Berlin–Charlottenburg area, and former residence of

the U.S. military attaché. For the next two years this was his home and the centre of Indian nationalist activity. It was here that he began recruiting Indians to his cause. One of them was Abid Hasan, an electrical engineer. Hasan thinks he was the second Indian Bose recruited and his experiences illustrated Bose's technique.

Hasan, who comes from a rich 'Nawabi' family of Hyderabad, was already politically aware, and on his visits to India he had attended Congress meetings and during the non-co-operation movement even landed in jail. But in Germany he was part of a microscopic Indian community, unaware of his compatriots' existence and just intent on carrying on with his work. The meeting with Bose changed all that. 'At our first meeting,' he recalls, 'we spoke for about an hour. And he devoted himself completely to me. I had to recount everything from my birth onwards. He asked me, for instance, why I had taken electrical engineering, was I fond of mathematics and all that. There was nothing about what he was going to do, what he had done. It was only about me, my family, what my father had done, whether I had taken any part in political activity. He was really surprised that I had. This was his secret. He showed such great personal interest.' At the end of it Hasan required little persuasion: he would remain one of Bose's most devoted followers. Slowly Bose built up his team. Bewildered by the succession of European events, unable to comprehend how, living in Germany, they could help India, yet curious, these Indians – as Girija Mookerjee recalls – 'fell under Subhas' charm'. It was a personal bond and one they willingly maintained for the rest of their lives.

Their first task was to organise the programmes for the Azad Hind radio – Free India radio – which began broadcasting within days of the opening of the Centre. Initially the programme was simple: forty-five minutes consisting of a talk by Bose, who was still His Excellency Orlando Mazzotta, and some news. Soon there were sometimes thirty-five Indians working at the Centre, and already Bose had begun to tell them of his other plan: an Azad Hind Fauz – a Free India Army.

But he drew, Hasan recalls, the necessary historical parallels. Ireland had raised a revolutionary army, but when she had declared independence no important power had backed her. The U.S.A. had won her freedom because France – a leading nation – had immedi-

ately recognised her: along with military strength, there must be foreign political help. For the handful gathered round him this was a sensation – they had never heard anything like it before. Hasan's senses 'told him it was absolute rot and nonsense this fellow was speaking'. There were never more than ten or twelve at such gatherings, some twenty Indians in Germany, some fifty in all occupied Europe – yet 'here was a man who was talking of having an army of thousands and a diplomatic corps of hundreds. But somehow or other so great was his personality that you believed him. Every one of us believed in this fantasy.'

About this time a German army officer, Lt-Col. Soldtman, interrogated a first group of 1,000 Indian soldiers and thirty-seven officers at the Italian POW camp at Derna and reported that they were strongly anti-British. The SS were eager to organise them but, despite German requests, the Italians refused to hand them over, claiming that they needed them for their own immediate propaganda activities. Other attempts followed, including one to recruit Pushtu-speaking Indian POWs. By June 1941, however, Indian POWs had begun to assemble at Annaburg near Dresden in Saxony.

On 16 October von Ribbentrop himself revived the idea of using Indian POWs for 'broadcasting purposes in case of a possible advance into the Caucasus, into Iran, etc.'. He wanted everything to be 'fully ready for action in about two months'. And money was no problem. As the Foreign Office note concluded, 'In so far as funds were needed for this he was willing to make them available'. Von Ribbentrop's views were meant for Hitler, who 'unambiguously' recommended the setting-up of an Indian Legion. But again the Italians intervened. A summit conference between the Free India Centre and the Italian Ufficio India in Berlin in December 1941 had agreed that work on the formation of the Indian Legion should start immediately; an infantry batallion was to be raised and all training was to take place under German command. But the Italians were tardy in releasing the Indian POWs to the Germans – a delay which led ultimately to the Schedai explosion – and, despite Hitler, the OKW, the German high command, continued to treat the whole exercise as an experiment, as von Trott bitterly minuted.

Besides, the Germans had a lot to learn about Indian soldiers and the conditioning they had received under centuries of British rule. In Annaburg there were complaints about food and the disregard of

caste habits. Later, German investigators researching the attitudes of Indian POWs in north Africa discovered that the British policy of isolating them from politics had worked wonderfully well: the soldiers were indeed, as their British masters wanted, completely non-political: more interested in the Vedas than political literature. Asked why they were fighting Germany, they replied it was because 'the present lord of India' wished it; they had joined the army to avoid hunger. It was only the swastika on the investigator's uniform that brought any response: it was, after all, a famous and ancient Hindu religious symbol. Worse, though the Germans had separated the Indians from their British officers they had not segregated the men from the NCOs, who had a long history of active collaboration with the British.

So when Bose visited the Annaburg camp in December 1941 he was met with hostility and anger. Carefully coached by the collaborationist NCOs, the men refused to listen to him. But Bose was persistent, and the next day, in personal interviews, some of the anger melted. The men were curious about ranks, pay, loss of British benefits, new laurels from the Germans. To all this, Bose's reply was the same. This is for India. This is not a mercenary army like the British Army: you are fighting for a cause. But, as ever, he was a good listener, and many went away convinced of his sincerity and his cause. On his return to Berlin Bose decided to separate the NCOs from the men and send two of his trusted workers, Swami and Abid Hasan, to the camps. For recruitment various methods were used. It was found that the most effective were the traditional ones: more money, more food, Red Cross parcels and access to women. But there is no proof that violence was used, and in the end only 4,000 of the 15,000 POWs joined the Legion, only a handful of whom were officers.

On the wider front of a Free India declaration Bose could still get little joy, and he had begun to be worried about the attention he was receiving in the British press. On 10 November 1941 Eric Conran-Smith, secretary of the Home Department of the government of India had told the Indian Council of State, one of the many cosy bodies for Indian collaborationists of the Raj, that Bose had 'gone over to the enemy' and signed a pact with the Axis designed to lead to the invasion of India. This was the start of a tremendous propaganda offensive against Bose. The British press, which had so far

been speculating in which *ashram* he was and how he had escaped, now latched on to the notion of 'Bose the quisling' – a theme song that the more propagandist and imperialist papers like the *Daily Express* and *Evening News* maintained till well into the 1960s.

The *Daily Mail*, with a photograph of Bose under the caption 'Indian turns traitor', announced: 'Indian Quisling No. 1 flees to Hitler'. The *Daily Express* carried a photograph of Bose in a long overcoat and Gandhi cap talking to a German guard at a Berlin zoo in 1934, and the heading: 'Indian leader plans invasion 5th Column'; while for the *Empire News* it was 'Chandra Bose Haw-Haw'. 'Subhas Chandra Bose, India's Quisling No. 1, is to become the Indian 'Lord Haw-Haw' broadcasting from Berlin.' Its amazingly ignorant correspondent informed readers that Bose had been deposed as Congress president in 1940 because Gandhi had discovered he was a German agent, been kept under house arrest, escaped (by dressing in women's clothes) with the help of Axis agents – and finally arrived in Berlin via Afghanistan, Syria and Rome.

For Bose this was a cruel moment. He could do nothing about these lies, for he was still incognito; and he was still unable even to get an audience with von Ribbentrop. Bose, if von Trott's biographer is to be believed (and he seems to have got this meeting confused with some other), got so fed up that he vowed never to see von Ribbentrop even if an invitation arrived. But when, on 29 November 1941, a messenger arrived at Bose's residence at midnight, Subhas was made to get up from his bed and go to Wilhelmstrasse.

The hour with von Ribbentrop was hardly encouraging. After thanking the German government for its help and hospitality, Bose showed him the British press cuttings and said it was necessary to make a reply 'so that his followers would not defect'. He also raised a problem that had been bothering him ever since Hitler had come to power: his derogatory references to Indians in *Mein Kampf*. These, he said, 'had been exploited in an unfavourable sense by English propaganda. It was by far the most important thing to let the Indian people know what the Führer thought about India because the Indian people did not know either Germany or the views held there.' But von Ribbentrop was more interested in haranguing Bose about his own world view. As far as the decla-

ration on India was concerned, the time had not yet come; 'German policy did not think much of declarations with no force behind them, because it was possible that the opposite effect from the one desired could occur.' Look at Iraq and Syria, warned von Ribbentrop – they had both been lost to Germany. India was not quite the same but 'there, too, however, one should proceed cautiously and only say something concrete when a success was in view, for example when German troops had crossed the Caucasus'.

Only one thing was certain: England would be destroyed and her empire would fall. When Bose, who doubted whether Hitler was quite that ill-disposed to England, asked if this was the Führer's view, von Ribbentrop replied that 'the Führer believed in the final defeat of England'. The only thing von Ribbentrop offered Bose was a possible meeting with Hitler, who had met the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem the day before.

But all this was soon overtaken by news from the East. Japan had at last entered the war.

In October 1941 Colonel Yamamoto Bin, Japanese military attaché in Berlin, received a telegram from the Imperial Japanese headquarters to 'make a direct observation of a man named Bose and report'. Japan, feverishly preparing for war, had just started taking an interest in India and was curious about Bose. But with Bose under the personal 'protection' of the German Foreign Ministry, Yamamoto could make no headway. It required the personal intervention of the Japanese ambassador, Lieutenant-General Oshima Hiroshi, for the Germans to allow the Japanese to meet Bose. They met in late October and Bose, who had attempted to contact the Japanese himself, made an impassioned plea for Indian independence. India had long looked to Japan for guidance and light, her 1905 victory over Russia had marked the regeneration of Asia after a long slumber, and now she must help India awaken to light and freedom. Yamamoto and Oshima were impressed, and soon Bose became a frequent and welcome visitor to their embassy. After Pearl Harbor, as Japan progressed triumphantly through the East, Bose congratulated Oshima and Yamamoto and posed the question that would dominate his activities in 1942: when could he go east?

This was not the only contact Bose had had with the Japanese. Dwijendranath Bose has told us of Shankarlal's visit to Japan and

the liaison Dwijendranath himself maintained with the Japanese consul in Calcutta. After Subhas' departure from India these contacts were intensified. In April 1941 the Japanese consul-general in Calcutta telegraphed Matsuoka, the Foreign Minister in Tokyo: 'We should secretly transport large quantities of weapons and substantially increase the actual strength of the Forward Bloc. But even then the long awaited moment of independence and the expulsion of British imperialism will only come through their own soldiers' attack and a genuine popular movement. At the same time on our part we must, at least, contact Bose and his party.'

Matsuoka's reply – if he made one – has not been preserved, but Dwijendranath's contacts with the Japanese in Calcutta reached a stage where the Japanese wanted to meet somebody more capable of taking decisions. Dwijendranath decided to involve Sarat. It was a risky move. Sarat was far too well-known a political figure – constantly spied on – to be able to maintain clandestine links successfully, and the day the contact was established the whole mission was nearly aborted.

Dwijendranath had fixed a meeting between Sarat Bose and the Japanese consul at the latter's Ballygunge Circular Road house. Dwijendranath made all the preparations in James Bond fashion, including three changes of car. But when he arrived at Sarat Bose's house he found him deeply engrossed in professional consultations and not ready to leave. When he did agree to come he insisted on taking his own Studebaker President with his chauffeur at the wheel. When they arrived at the consul-general's house they found the gate was locked. A group of what seemed to be unemployed loafers were playing cards there. The Boses persuaded the gatekeeper to open up, only to find the consul asleep. Dwijendranath was convinced the 'loafers' were British agents and that he would soon be arrested.

His cousin Sisir has a different story to tell – one more flattering of his father Sarat's ability to engage in clandestine activities. One afternoon in the summer of 1941 a Bengali gentleman called on Sarat with a message from the Japanese consul-general! Sarat arranged to see him at his country home in Rishra and from then on there were frequent meetings. When that consul-general was replaced by another he brought his wife along and gave it the veneer of a social occasion, but serious business was not forgotten. Maps of

Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province were examined, occasionally Satya Bakshi joined in, and the Japanese conveyed messages from Subhas received via Berlin and Tokyo. But the British must have been privy to all this – whether through the 'loafers' or by some other means we do not know – and soon after Japan entered the war Sarat Bose was arrested. He spent the rest of the war in jail.

With that, Subhas Bose's underground links with the Japanese came to an end. What these links meant to the Japanese high command is difficult to say – the records are scanty and in most cases non-existent. It is very probable they were the eager work of men in the field anxious to promote their country's cause but whose efforts their masters dutifully noted and ignored. For as Bose pressed Yamamoto and Oshima for a decision on his transfer to Asia the Japanese showed a curious ambivalence: they were interested in Bose and keen to do something about India, but not quite sure what it should be.

The ambivalence had its roots in Japan's historical relationship with India. Before the Second World War India, for Japan, had been the home of Buddha, a land of pilgrimage and the source of ancient religious, cultural and artistic wisdom. Gandhi's unconventional political methods and Tagore's literary skills had provided some points of modern interest, but this remained confined to the experts in the universities. After the First World War Japan had provided a home for some Indian nationalists, the most prominent of them being Rash Behari Bose (no relation to Subhas), but till 1940 India did not figure in any of Japan's political plans.

That year Japan's intended Asian empire, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, was defined, and India was excluded. The Indo-Burmese frontier was to be the western limit of Japan's conquests. Japan wanted to reserve India as a bait to get the Russians to join the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan, and though, just before Pearl Harbor, a War Ministry paper had outlined a Japanese empire from the Arctic to the Antarctic and from the west coast of India to the eastern islands of the Caribbean Sea, during the detailed planning these ideas were quickly buried. Up to and for some considerable time after her entry into the war Japan's interest was in the areas considered vital for the survival of her empire. Hong Kong, Indo-China, the Philippines, Malaya,

Singapore, the Dutch East Indies and Burma, with a neutral Thailand, and a possible expansion into Australia and New Zealand – but not India. But Japan had to fight Britain, and that meant Indian troops in British pay; Japanese planners appreciated the need for subversion, resulting in army headquarters' plans which would lead to a major Japanese involvement in India.

These moves, however, took time to mature, and were inevitably bogged down in the endless suspicion and jealousy with which the Axis partners viewed each other. While Italy welcomed Japan's interest, Hitler scorned it, and Japan in turn seemed to be increasingly preoccupied with other matters. Worse still, von Ribbentrop vetoed a call by Indian nationalists in east Asia to transfer Bose there. Bose vigorously argued his own case, but apart from furthering his friendship with Colonel Yamamoto he achieved little. However, he was having a considerable effect on the British in India. The Raj was increasingly alarmed by Bose's activities and the relentless Japanese advance, and by early January 1942 it was in a state of virtual panic.

Political India seemed dead. Azad, the Congress president, emerging from prison, felt 'a sense of humiliation . . . we seemed to be the victims of circumstances, and not the masters of our destiny!' The Congress was no nearer its goal of freedom. But the Congress Right was once again willing to talk to the British, and at a meeting in Bardoli Rajagopalachari and Azad were able to persuade the Working Committee to offer to co-operate in any resistance against the Japanese in return for freedom. This encouraged the most prominent Indian collaborators to send a message to Churchill, who was in America, calling for a fresh initiative to solve the 'Indian problem'.

Churchill and Amery struggled to come up with an answer that would look different yet preserve British rule, Linlithgow gave them his usual advice: sit tight, do nothing – we are the rulers, we must rule. But Linlithgow's main reason for coming to this characteristic conclusion was his fear of Subhas Bose's activities. The crucial paragraph of his telegram of 21 January 1942 read:

> I take very seriously too in urging my conclusions the possibility that further transfer of power would give marked encouragement to quisling activities. Recent report from military authori-

ties in Eastern India is to the effect that there is a large and dangerous potential 5th column in Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa. And that indeed potential of pro-enemy sympathy and activity in Eastern India is enormous. Sarat Bose has been a lesson. The activities of U Saw and Tin Tut (senior civil servants occupying responsible positions) are another and grave one. I know that we are frequently urged to do something 'to touch the heart of India' and our sympathies naturally lean in that direction. But Cabinet will agree with me that India and Burma have no natural association with the empire, from which they are alien by race, history and religion, and for which as such neither of them have any natural affection, and both are in the empire because they are conquered countries which have been brought there by force, kept there by our controls, and which hitherto it has suited to remain under our protection.

It was a revealing paragraph, and its repercussions were immediately felt. Attlee, who had been pressing for a move on India – a statement of policy or a promise of future constitutional action – was aghast. Churchill, of course, had often declared that he had not become His Majesty's First Secretary of State to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire; but events had forced his hand. Early in 1942 Roosevelt told close friends that he thought India was lost to the Japanese, and Churchill himself told King George VI that Burma, Ceylon, Calcutta, Madras and part of Australia might fall. The War Cabinet now preferred to listen to Attlee, who was convinced that the Viceroy was a disaster and that until something was done India would fall to the Japanese and Bose. On 15 February 1942 Singapore fell; four days later Cripps, recently returned from Russia where he had been considered a great success as an ambassador, entered the War Cabinet, and Attlee set about drafting the proposals with which Cripps was finally entrusted to take to India.

On the very same day Bose finally shed his now useless Mazzotta guise and for the first time broadcast openly over Azad Hind Radio. India's moment of liberation had come: 'The fall of Singapore means the collapse of the British Empire, and the end of the iniquitous regime which it has symbolised and the dawn of a new era in Indian history.'

Bose's statement was broadcast and re-broadcast several times

over Axis radios, and Goebbels was suitably impressed. He recorded in his diary: 'Bose's appeal has made a deep impression on world public opinion. The crisis in India can no longer be denied' – though he recognised that nothing tangible would emerge till the Japanese gained some more victories.

On 26 February 1942 Bose submitted an ambitious eleven-point proposal for co-ordinated Axis propaganda: Rangoon should become the centre of Indian propaganda, Bose himself should go there (Burma, he was convinced, would be set free by the Japanese, and this would have a tonic effect on India), Indian nationalists should invite Axis powers to India in order to prevent anti-Axis uprisings in India, and Japan should advance into India with Indian volunteers helping them. As this happened Bose's men would be instructed to start sabotage activities. The end result would be the perfect scenario: the Germans would advance through the Caucasus, the Japanese navy would seize the coastal towns of Chittagong, Calcutta, Madras, Karachi and Bombay, and India would be free.

Though the Germans said little about this, they did appear keen on a Free India declaration. On 22 February a new draft had appeared, and the day Bose presented his ideas von Trott drew up a detailed day-by-day programme, starting with a public statement by Bose, and followed by Hitler's receiving him and then by the declaration. Italy quickly agreed, but Japan – now crucial – would make no positive response either on the declaration or the plans for India, despite repeated requests by von Ribbentrop. On 28 February Bose broadcast again. On 1 March Goebbels recorded in his diary: 'We have succeeded in prevailing upon the Indian nationalist leader Bose to issue an imposing declaration of war against England. It will be published most prominently in the German press and commented upon. In that way we shall now begin our official fight on behalf of India, even though we don't as yet say it openly.' But in the face of the Japanese refusal to be drawn on their plans for India and the Cripps mission the German efforts died a natural death: the declaration was once again buried and, when Bose asked for free leave to proceed to the East, von Ribbentrop brusquely turned him down.

Yet at this very moment Bose and the German efforts were making an impact on British policy. We have already seen how

Attlee was affected by news of Bose's activities in India; the German propaganda offensive was another important reason for some sort of British response, and at last, on 11 March, Churchill announced in the House of Commons that Stafford Cripps would be going to India with a fresh set of proposals.

While Cripps travelled eastwards Bose left Berlin for Bad Gastein in Austria – frustrated, angry and quite at a loss as to what to do. Once again the Germans had promised much but delivered little. When in mid-March von Trott (or somebody else – it is not quite clear who) visited Bad Gastein in order to get him to return to Berlin, Bose lambasted the Germans: they could not be serious about Indian independence. They kept on postponing the declaration, and they had not even helped in the recruitment of the Indian Legion. Perhaps the whole Indian show was part of an effort to reach some sort of compromise with the British. After all, Bose had heard the Japanese speculating that the Nazis would never let Bose go in case he became a useful bargaining counter in any negotiations with the British. The visitor suggested that German panacea – a meeting with the Führer; which, it was hoped, would entice Bose back to Berlin. So, while Cripps revelled in his role as expert and friend of India in Delhi, Bose, who had played such a major part in launching him, sulked in BadGastein. But not for long.

The Cripps proposals were not as great an advance as the British government made out. In fact, as Amery pointed out to a disturbed Linlithgow, who was horrified at the idea of a mission from England and happy when it ended in failure, it was a holding operation: a limited exercise that would appease many people yet give nothing away. Neither, however, had realised what the personal effect of Cripps would be.

At his first meeting with Maulana Azad, the Congress president, Cripps assured him that the expanded Executive Council that would aid the Viceroy would consist only of Indian members and would in fact function like the British Cabinet. The Viceroy would be a titular head, and the Secretary of State for India reduced to the role played by the Dominion Secretary in relation to other Dominions such as Australia and New Zealand. But this was much more than Cripps could deliver: a horrified Linlithgow threatened to resign, Amery and Churchill pulled Cripps up, and Azad and the Congress soon realised that the British were once again asking for

co-operation during the war in return for 'jam tomorrow'.

There is a fair amount of debate about who was actually responsible for the talks' breaking down. Nehru's most recent biographer, Gopal, blames Cripps, while Cripps to his dying day believed that it was Gandhi who sabotaged his plans. And it was on Gandhi that Bose's activities and broadcasts had had their biggest impact. Azad, to his shock, discovered that – while Gandhi still had no clear idea about the war – he was doubtful of an Allied victory; and 'that Subhas Bose's escape to Germany had made a great impression on Gandhiji. He had not formerly approved many of Bose's actions but now I found a change in his outlook. Many of his remarks convinced me that he admired the courage and resourcefulness Subhas Bose had displayed in making his escape from India. His admiration for Subhas Bose unconsciously coloured his view about the whole war situation.' He was also a keen listener to Bose's broadcasts.

The Cripps mission had got Bose's adrenalin flowing again. In a series of broadcasts he denounced Cripps and the Indians who were now seeking a compromise with the British. The British Empire was breaking up anyway; 'It will soon disappear from the face of the earth and consequently, even if Britain were to offer to India terms that are far more conciliatory than the British proposals, there is no meaning in entering into a compromise with such a power.' And if Britain by some chance won the war, how could the Indians enforce the guarantee? Had the collaborators forgotten, he asked, that ever since 1927 the Congress had year after year declared that it would have nothing to do with a British war? In 1939 the Congress had expelled M.N. Roy for suggesting co-operation with the British. Yet the very same leaders were going back on their words. 'We are, therefore, waiting,' Bose added bitingly, 'to see what disciplinary action will be taken against these gentlemen' – men who all their political lives had called themselves faithful followers of Gandhi.

The Germans quite naturally claimed that these broadcasts had an immense impact, Goebbels noting in his diary that 'Bose's propaganda conducted and guided from here is gradually getting on the nerves of the British.' The modern British view is that their effect was negligible, although certainly a great many people in India heard him.

There was a convincing testimony to Gandhi's sympathies when,

in the middle of Cripps' mission, news came that Bose had died in a plane crash. Though Bose was broadcasting openly from Berlin it was still not clear to many where he was, and many believed the report that he had died in a plane carrying some Indian nationalists to Tokyo. While Bose in Berlin fretted that he could not convey the correct news to his family, Gandhi consoled his mother. 'The whole nation mourns with you the death of your brave son. I share your sorrow to the full. May God give you courage to bear this unexpected loss.'

Nehru was most upset about this message, and Gandhi, referring to Nehru's reaction, sorrowfully told Ranga later that 'Some people did not like it.' Cripps was appalled. Many in India had mourned Bose's death, but for a man like Gandhi – a believer in non-violence – to do so was for him the final proof: the British could never work with that old man. Gandhi, he concluded, was determined to prevent a compromise.

The failure of the Cripps mission marked a watershed for both the Congress and Bose, and led to a parting of the ways. The Congress, and Gandhi in particular, were now convinced that there could be no future in negotiations with the British, while Bose increasingly turned to Japan.

Japan's attempts to organise her own group of Indians had by now progressed more than the Germans' – she had thousands of Indian POWs and also many Indian leaders, though none of them possessed the standing of Subhas Bose.

With the help of Rash Behari Bose and others they organised a conference of Indian nationalists in Tokyo, and in two crucial speeches General Tojo, the Japanese Prime Minister, promised more than any Axis leader had done so far: a free India if the Indians joined in defeating Britain.

Japan had also come to a decision about Subhas Bose. Indian nationalists had long been pressing the Japanese government to bring him over from Berlin, but the Japanese had not been sure if they could afford to do that. Their experience with south Asian Indian nationalists had been an increasingly uncomfortable one; and there was Rash Behari Bose. How would he react to another, more famous leader being brought over to lead the movement? Finally a Japanese official invited Rash Behari to his office and put the question. 'In that case,' replied Rash Behari, 'I would step down.'

On 17 April 1942 the Cabinet decided to 'use Subhas Chandra Bose according to present policy and concomitant with the development of the situation of the 10 January decision'. On that day it had been decided that Japan would stimulate anti-British propaganda in India and 'invite [Bose] to Tokyo and judge his utility value from the standpoint of this policy. At the same time we shall inform him of Japan's national power and the enthusiasm of all Japan for assisting India's independence.'

Almost simultaneously the Japanese revived their interest in a joint Axis declaration on India, and the familiar game was resumed, though this was to be the final round. On 11 April 1942 the Japanese, for the first time, sent their Axis partners a draft declaration on India and the Arab peoples. Wilhelmstrasse was not impressed: the draft was 'too journalistic and little concrete'; while the Italians were worried that the reference to 'Arabic peoples' might mean their colonies in the Arab sphere of influence. Despite this, they were keen on a declaration, and the German Foreign Office produced yet another draft. This, together with the Japanese one, was presented by von Ribbentrop to Hitler on 16 April with a strong recommendation for acceptance. Knowing his Führer, von Ribbentrop argued that such a declaration would be welcomed by 'peace-favouring circles in Britain', an idea which was a bee in Hitler's bonnet.

But he was still not convinced, and the next day he rejected it. He saw 'no point in adhering to such a declaration just when the Japanese want it'. Japan's astonishingly rapid progress had revived all his old fears about 'the yellow peril', and when the two leaders met on 29 April he used this argument to sweep away Mussolini's pleas in favour of the declaration. But Bose made one more attempt to obtain some sort of statement, and on 5 May he met Mussolini and persuaded him to become his advocate. The Italian dictator at once telegraphed the Germans proposing a revision of the recent decision. Hitler, though he would have none of this, was considerably upset that Mussolini had seen Bose before he had, and a somewhat surprised Bose was told on his return to Berlin that Hitler would now meet him. On 27 May Bose flew to Hitler's headquarters.

Depending on whose version of these talks you accept, Hitler either treated Bose as a pariah, or the Indian hero told the Führer the facts of political life. The official version, minuted by Schmidt,

Hitler's interpreter, contains perhaps the most sober version of this dismal meeting. Both men seemed to have indulged in a fair bit of play-acting. Bose greeted Hitler as an old 'revolutionary', thanked him for the 'honour' of meeting him and vowed that the 'day would forever remain as a historical date in his life'. Though Japan could help the Indian revolution more materially now, Germany would still remain important; could the Führer, as an 'old and experienced revolutionary' advise him? This was all the prompting Hitler needed, and there followed one of Hitler's characteristic monologues: part history, part folklore, much dangerous nonsense. But after having described himself as a soldier who never promised what he could not deliver, he warned Bose that he 'should not forget that the power of a country could only be exercised within the range of its sword'. Bose should take care to work out a safe journey to the East, since he was 'too important a personality to let his life be endangered' by an experiment such as flying to Tokyo from Rome. And the old revolutionary's instincts convinced him that it would take India 'one hundred to two hundred years' to become a nation – as it had done Germany.

When Bose boldly interrupted to question the racial slurs on Indians in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler lost some of his fluency and justified his utterances by saying that weak subject nations could not 'build up a united front against the oppressors'. In any case, he had had to say those things, in order to discourage passive resistance in Germany from developing along the Indian pattern 'which in any case was a completely wrong doctrine'.

Though Hitler ended the meeting by wishing Bose well in his travel plans, it had been a disaster. And Bose would later tell his friends how impossible the German leader was: a Teutonic version of the Faqir of Ipi, with whom one could not hold a coherent discussion for even a few minutes.

Bose's German work was now almost all propaganda. The meeting had made him a public figure, and he increasingly featured in the German press. But some of the shrewder British papers noted that not all his remarks pleased the Germans – particularly a reference to the war lasting a 'very long time, possibly several years'. This part of his statement had been suppressed in the German press. This, of course, was not the only restriction Bose faced. Since shortly after his arrival, all his calls had been monitored. The Gestapo watched

him closely – Yamamoto got the impression he was guarded by a 'tiger cub' – and Bose was wary of communicating even with friends.

But in areas where the Special India Department had greater control, Bose was allowed to do his own thing. Werth has told us that the radio broadcasts were not censored. By now – in the summer of 1942 – both the Free India Centre and the radio propaganda were at their height, with three radio stations operating. The forty-five minute broadcasts had lengthened to three hours, there were a variety of languages ranging from English through Tamil and Telugu to Marathi, and a simple diet of talks was supplemented by Indian music recorded from the BBC.

Bose had attached a planning cell to the Free India Centre and freely expressed to his German colleagues his vision of the India to be. He had studied many forms of governments, he said, but there was only one that was suitable – dictatorship with firm state control and centralised planning. Perhaps, von Trott would suggest, a British form of parliamentary government might work in India. No, Bose would reply, India needed iron control – and, as if to further this aim, he envisaged a 'protection force' to be trained by the German Gestapo.

But his best, most spectacular efforts were directed towards the Indian Legion. Problems had continued to dog the Legion. The elaborate plans made by Talwar and the German agents in Afghanistan – airstrips in the tribal areas, parachute drops – had come to nothing. When Rommel launched his campaign in July 1942 the German Foreign Office proposed attaching a company of Indian troops to his army: Rommel promptly squashed that, and Hitler, of course, thought the Legion was a joke.

Bose rejected plans to transfer the Legion to Greece for training: they were too raw to be so far away from the influence of the Free India Centre. And then there was the disruptive influence of the Italians. But the Legion did serve as a useful propaganda unit, and in north Africa, in one fortnight in July–August 1942, the Afrika Korps reported forty-seven desertions from the British Indian Army. The numbers were not significant, but for Bose they were psychologically important: the British Indian Army was slowly becoming politicised. It was in this direction that he now bent all his energies. With recruitment of volunteers in Germany slow, Bose

increasingly travelled to Italy (he wanted to go to Libya but was evidently not allowed to) to talk to and persuade mercenary soldiers. Girija Mookerjee observed his efforts: 'I saw how the whole audience was coming under his spell and how they were listening. . . . When he had finished . . . they had acquired new life, new animation, new excitement. Most had come out of sheer curiosity. Dozens now asked to be enrolled.'

Standing very erect under a tree, this is what he would often tell the POWs. 'The English are like the dead snake which the people are afraid of even after its death. There is no doubt that the British have lost this battle. The problem is how to take charge of our country. . . . We are young and we have a sense of self-respect. We shall take freedom by the strength of our arms. Freedom is never given, it is taken.' His listeners were peasants, far from home, in unfamiliar, confusing surroundings and full of doubts about what was happening. But for many a Bose speech was the revelation on the road to Damascus. They made this personal pledge: 'Hukam Netajika bajana padega' – 'We shall have to carry out the orders of Netaji.'

Certain problems remained. Food was one. Many Indians were vegetarian and had to survive on potato and cabbage, and even those that ate meat could not stomach beef or pork. Special provisions had to be made for prayers, and there were dissensions about ranks and positions in the Legion. But in October 1942 the first battalion paraded in front of Bose and other guests including Yamamoto. Their expansion had meant they were now on the Wehrmacht payroll and had to take a loyalty oath to Hitler. Five hundred Legionaries under Lt-Col. Krappe declared:

> I swear by God this holy oath that I will obey the leader of the German State and Adolf Hitler as Commander of the German Armed Forces in the fight for freedom of India in which fight the leader is Subhas Chandra Bose and that as a brave soldier I am willing to lay down my life for this oath.

Bose presented to the Legionaries the tricolour in green, white and saffron of the Indian National Congress, a picture of a springing tiger superimposed on it, and told them, 'Your names will be written in golden letters in the history of Free India: every martyr in

this holy war will have a monument there. I shall lead the army when we march to India together.' Yet even as he spoke these words he knew he would never lead this army to India. Japan increasingly beckoned him, and the Legion was a footnote in his plans. Its subsequent history was not particularly glorious. In December 1942, its basic training completed, the Germans at last began giving it publicity. But there was no fighting for India, and after Bose left Germany there were suspicions amongst the men about his whereabouts. In April 1943 – two months after Bose had gone – there was a mutiny, with a whole battalion refusing to go on active service. That was dealt with; but in the next month the Legion virtually ceased to exist as such. The three battalions of 1,000 men each were absorbed into the German Army and called Infantry Regiment No. 950. Instead of moving east, they moved west to Lacanau in the Bordeaux region. This did little for their morale or their fighting spirit. When in the summer of 1944 it retreated to Germany, the Legion was absorbed into the Waffen-SS. After the war its members were captured by the Allies and put on trial at the Red Fort.

But, though none of them had fought for India, they had served a limited purpose. As A.C.N. Nambiar, Bose's appointed successor in Germany, puts it, being in the Legion saved the men in 1944 from being employed as slave labour in 'distant regions where severe conditions prevailed', and 'their return to India was facilitated'. That, in the conditions in Europe after May 1945, was no small achievement.

Despite the Japanese government's decision to invite him, and the agreement in June 1942 between von Ribbentrop and Oshima, the Japanese ambassador, about Bose's transfer, Tokyo still made no firm move. On 23 July Bose wrote to von Ribbentrop, 'In view of the internal developments in India, I would like to be in the Far East in the first week of August, if possible.' It was another uncanny Bose prediction. But though von Ribbentrop agreed, he could do nothing. As India erupted during August 1942 Bose was still in Germany, with only the radio to encourage his cause.

Indian nationalist historians have presented the Quit India struggle of 1942 as a brilliant movement which very nearly won the war against the British. It was, like all nationalist agitations, a genuinely popular one; but, very far from being successful, it was wretchedly

led and devised – in fact its leaders were arrested even before it could be launched. That it continued very nearly into the summer of 1943 only revealed the depth of nationalist sentiment, a revelation that surprised both the British and the Indian leaders. It was Gandhi's last campaign – and one that mercilessly exposed the inadequacy of his planning and his dependence on 'inner light'. Gandhi, as we have seen, had been impressed by Bose's activities, and by 1942 he was convinced that the Allies would lose the war. He was also certain that Japan had no evil designs on India and that, if the British left, she would not invade. Nehru was still opposed to any hint that India was not with the Allies in the struggle against the Axis; but, as so often, Gandhi knew his India. The Indians, far from being pro-Allied, were in fact vehemently anti-British, and if anything welcomed Japanese victories. The British government's racially discriminatory behaviour in the face of Japanese invasion in east Asia had deepened this distrust. Gandhi's statement 'I am so sick of slavery that I am even prepared to take the risk of anarchy' was echoed by many.

By May, Gandhi had begun preparing resolutions for the Congress expressing such views, and, though opposition from Azad in particular and Nehru (to an extent) modified them when the Working Committee met between 5 and 14 July 1942, it formulated the policy that came to be known as the Quit India resolution. Britain should leave India, it demanded, though Gandhi was now willing to sign an immediate defence pact with the Allies to safeguard India from Axis aggression.

Yet, having given this call for war, Gandhi made no plans. Naïvely, he assumed that the British government would allow him to function and to scheme for this revolution even after the Congress had announced its policy. But as soon as the Congress rumblings became evident, the War Cabinet instructed Linlithgow to deport Gandhi to Aden and the other members of the Working Committee to Nyasaland – a warship was readied off the coast of Bombay for this purpose – and to crush the Congress. Linlithgow rejected the deportations but agreed on severe repression. In the evening of 8 August 1942 the A.I.C.C. met on the sands of Chowpatty beach in Bombay and passed the Quit India resolution by an overwhelming majority. In the early hours of the next morning the British government unleashed its carefully prepared offensive. Gandhi, Nehru,

Azad and many others, down to the lowest level of Congress leadership, were arrested and India was virtually placed under military control. In spite of this the movement continued, a remarkable testimony to the strength of the nationalist feeling. Underground radio stations operated for some months afterwards, and there were many successful guerrilla movements; 318 police stations were burnt, 945 post offices raided and fifty-nine trains derailed. It required all the armed might of the British in India to crush the biggest threat to their rule since 1857. Scores of battalions were used, the Whipping Act was re-introduced. Over 60,000 were arrested and on six occasions rebel territories were bombed from the air.

By the autumn of 1943 the revolt was over. For Gandhi it marked a colossal personal defeat, and he never recovered his political touch. For Bose in Berlin this was a frustrating moment. He had predicted, almost to the day, the start of the revolt. (On 4 August von Trott wrote to another German official that Bose was expecting a major crisis after the A.I.C.C. meeting.) But he could do little except broadcast.

Gandhi had responded to his calls three years later than Bose would have wished for, but the fight was at last on. Yet words, Bose knew, were not enough. In retrospect it is clear that, had the Japanese been able to co-ordinate their Indian strategy with the August revolt, things might have been different. But the Japanese thought Gandhi had been premature, and they were still reluctant to transfer Bose to Asia. There were also technical problems: the Germans, Italians and Japanese, aware of their fading control over air- and sea-space, were never able to agree on the best method. In June 1942 the Italians had agreed to fly Bose non-stop from Rhodes to Rangoon (they had just completed a similar flight) but the Japanese thought it was too dangerous. In August the Italians again got an aircraft ready but, though the Japanese at first agreed, they quickly vetoed the idea, arguing it would involve using Soviet air-space, which the Japanese – not at war with the Soviet Union – did not want to do. By mid-October yet another flight was arranged. Bose handed over charge of the Free India Centre to Nambiar, had a farewell meeting with von Ribbentrop on 14 October (the two men had another disagreement: von Ribbentrop did not think India was ripe for revolution; Bose was worried about

Japanese intentions) and prepared to fly from Rome on the 15th. But as the Germans had feared, the Italians had been unable to keep the news to themselves. On 12 October 1942 the *Daily Sketch* reported that Bose was leaving for the East. The flight was promptly cancelled. The following month there was almost an action replay: another journey to Rome, another cancellation.

These repeated disappointments had begun to tell on Bose. Associates who had always found him cool, collected and patient now feared his temper: he was uneasy, unable to concentrate on work and full of restless energy. His health had also broken down.

It was in January 1943 that Tokyo finally decided to accept Bose. The first Indian National Army, assisted by the Japanese, had been dissolved as a result of differences between Indians and Japanese, and Tokyo decided it could risk Bose.

On 8 February 1943 Bose and Hasan sailed from Kiel in a U-boat. Hasan had been thrilled by the idea of travelling in a submarine, but the moment he entered the U-boat his spirits sank, for they were to be quartered in a small dark corner and there was no escape from the all-pervasive fumes of diesel oil. 'The fumes permeated everything, the bread we ate looked as if it was soaked in diesel oil, the blankets seemed drenched with it and our corner was so small that if you stood erect you got in the way of somebody or other. It was really a small recess, the corner of a passage that was the officers' mess. People ate off the table there, part of the space was used by surgeons to perform their operations and there were navigational charts and instruments dotted round the place. Netaji was allowed a corner of about 2ft × 3ft. Fortunately we were still in German waters and allowed to come on the bridge.'

Once Bose had got used to the fumes – and the food – Hasan's last illusions were removed: 'I thought I would be getting three months of good rest but as soon as Netaji had settled in he started working.' For the ninety-three days the journey lasted, Bose sketched out his plans for India.

17

NETAJI

On 26 April 1943 the Japanese submarine I-29, commanded by Captain Mesao Teraoka, arrived in the Mozambique Channel, near that haven of neutral Portuguese territory. Six days earlier she had left Penang amidst tight security and ostensibly on a routine mission hunting enemy ships. In fact locals – many of them Indians – had been intrigued to see Teraoka, a submarine flotilla commander, take charge of the boat, and were convinced something was afoot when they learnt that the ship's cooks had been busy buying up spices for Indian curries. Long before the I-29 arrived in Portuguese waters rumours had circulated throughout Penang that the man they had long heard about and petitioned for was about to arrive. Fortunately for Bose these rumours did not reach the British; certainly it was only when the ship reached its destination that Captain Teraoka told his crew their mission – to fetch Subhas Bose.

The I-29 had arrived some ten hours ahead of schedule and it was only on the evening of the 26th that the Japanese spied the U-boat. In the enveloping darkness, transfer was impossible, and with both submarines required to maintain strict radio silence there could not even be any conversation or exchange of views. Sunrise on the 27th brought fresh problems: the seas were now so rough that the two boats could not even get near one another. All they could do was circle each other and wait for the weather to break. But their luck held: no enemy planes or ships arrived. And in the evening, as the sun was about to set, the Japanese officers saw two men jump overboard from the German vessel and swim towards them. Quickly hauled on board by the Japanese, they turned out to be a

German officer and signals man. The reason for their daredevilry was quickly made clear. The U-boat was low on fuel and could not carry on any longer.

As day dawned on the 28th the sea was still rough, but it was decided that the exchange must take place. The two Germans, on a rubber raft, dragged a strong manila hemp rope back to their boat; Bose and Hasan boarded the raft, clung to the rope and were literally hauled into the I-29. Bose could not have timed his arrival better – the next day the Japanese celebrated the emperor's birthday with *sake*; and as the submarine started its return voyage Bose was plied with Japanese-cooked curries. The transition from the unpalatable German diet was a great relief, but Bose was not yet used to four meals a day; when the Japanese kept insisting, he asked, 'Do we have to eat again, Captain Teraoka?'

But, for all their hospitality, the Japanese still did not know what to do with Bose, and feared that their deteriorating war position would not permit them to accept the idea that Bose had long advocated: a march on India. Bose himself was soon to become aware that everything was not right in the Co-Prosperity Sphere. After his arrival in Sabang (the I-29 had been diverted there, Penang being considered dangerous because of the rumours), Japanese officials were most concerned that he should rest and recuperate before making plans. When Bose replied that he had had all the rest he needed, they smiled politely but said nothing. His journey to Tokyo took five days, which illustrated how difficult travel had become in the Co-Prosperity Sphere, and a few days after he arrived in Tokyo all Japan mourned the death of Field-Marshal Yamamoto, the man who had conceived and directed the Pearl Harbor attack and promised his emperor six months of brilliant victories. The six months and with them the victories had long gone, and now Japan was clearly on the run: Guadalcanal was lost, and she had no answer to American submarines. German defeats in Stalingrad and Africa, too, had turned the tide against the Axis. Bose had arrived at the wrong time and Tojo, struggling with his problems, could see no good reason why he should receive the Indian. At Tokyo's Imperial Palace Hotel his quarters were sumptuous, and a stream of Japanese dignitaries, including the Navy Minister and the Foreign Minister, called on him; but for three weeks Tojo kept him waiting.

He relented on 10 June 1943. Not knowing what to expect, Bose

began the meeting quietly, but soon he launched into passionate argument for liberating India. Tojo, used to dealing with sycophants, particularly among the non-Japanese, was so taken by this that all his doubts seemed to vanish and he requested a second, more detailed meeting. This took place four days later, with Tojo flanked by his Foreign Minister, Shigemitsu Mamoru, and his Chief of Staff, General Sugiyama. When Tojo had finished trying to present the acceptable face of Japan's strategy, Bose asked, 'Have you, sir, considered the question of sending the Japanese Army into India for the liberation campaign if it is deemed necessary?' Bose had raised the same question with Sugiyama earlier, suggesting a march to Chittagong, but for Tojo this was a revolutionary proposal. His response was to prevaricate. But after Bose had left, he is said to have turned to Shigemitsu and declared, 'He is a great Indian, fully qualified to command the I.N.A. [Indian National Army].' Shigemitsu had already come to that conclusion and, with Rash Behari Bose having already met Subhas and confirmed that he was waiting for his younger namesake to take over, the problems were finally cleared.

Two days later Bose was invited to the Japanese parliament to listen to Tojo's formal acceptance speech. Japan, Tojo declared, fully sympathised with Indian efforts to free herself and would give all possible assistance. On 19 June Bose held his first press conference in Japan and over sixty Japanese and foreign newsmen gathered to hear him assert: 'The enemy that has drawn the sword must be fought with the sword. Civil disobedience must develop into armed struggle. And only when the Indian people receive the baptism of fire on a large scale, will they qualify for their freedom.'

His credentials, he said, were not in doubt: he had escaped in response to Indian needs, and all he was doing now was in accordance with the Indian people's deepest convictions. True, Japan had earlier been considered an aggressor in China – he himself had condemned her – but this was a new Japan: the country that had re-awakened Asia by her victory over Russia in 1905, and one whose cultural ties with India went back twenty centuries. This Japan had pledged her might to India's fight for freedom. There could be no going back.

On 27 June Bose left Tokyo for Singapore, arriving there on 2 July. As if in recognition of his new role, for the first time since that

nocturnal journey from Calcutta he did not travel under the pseudonym of Mazzotta (or even Matsuda, under which name he had travelled from Sabang to Tokyo); and for a whole week he received a delirious welcome from the Indian community. Two days after his arrival Subhas Bose formally took charge of the Indian independence movement in east Asia. Over 2,000 people witnessed and ratified the proceedings. Rash Behari made a gracious handover: 'You might now ask me what I did in Tokyo for our cause and what present I have brought for you. Well, I have brought you this present. . . . From now on Subhas Chandra Bose is your president, your leader in the fight for India's independence. And I am confident that under his leadership you will march on to battle and victory.' Then Bose delivered the first of his classic east Asia speeches. Whatever happened in the war, he said, the British Empire was doomed; but she would continue to tighten her grip on India. She might make face-saving compromise attempts but she would never give India up. Indian freedom would only be achieved when Indians abroad combined with Indians at home. The events that followed Gandhi's call to 'Quit India' in August 1942 had shown that India had moved from passive non-violence to active resistance. Now all that was required was for Indians abroad to organise and start a second front. For this, help from Japan and the Axis powers was necessary.

I know, he said, that some of you doubt the sincerity of the Axis powers. But are they doing India a favour? They, for their own purposes, want to destroy Britain's influence. As for sincerity, the best proof was he himself. All his life he had fought the British – their prisons, their governing class, their cunning and deceit. They had failed to corrupt him: how could the Japanese or the Germans succeed in a few months?

The next day Bose attended to the fighting army that would spearhead the revolutionary war. The I.N.A. was renamed the Azad Hind Fauj – Free India Army – and as it paraded in front of the Municipal Buildings in Singapore he addressed the soldiers of liberation. He had often dreamt of organising such an army, and in Germany had spent many hours planning and working for it. When he had arrived at Singapore airport he had been unable to take his eyes off the I.N.A. guard of honour assembled to greet him. Its officers and men were already his. He pledged himself to them.

The next day Tojo gave the army his approval. He did not allow a slight mishap – right in front of his reviewing stand the leading tank, flying the Indian flag, got entangled with some wires across the road, crashed and was run over by another tank – to disturb his composure, and the military display confirmed his excellent opinion of Bose. Even Field-Marshal Count Terauchi, commander of the Japanese forces in south-east Asia, was impressed, and when Tojo met Terauchi later the two men agreed that here was a leader of 'great calibre'.

On 9 July Bose and Tojo were together again, and in the central plaza of Singapore more than 60,000 Indians – nearly all the Indians in Singapore – gathered to express their support. At Tokyo, when Japanese newsmen had asked him if he had plans for Indian liberation, Bose had replied, 'Naturally there is a plan and the plan is being worked out.' Now he revealed it. A Provisional Government of Free India would be set up; it would own the allegiance of all the Indians in east Asia. 'Total mobilisation for a total war' would be the cry. He wanted 30 million dollars and 300,000 soldiers – an army that would be powerful enough to attack the British Army in India. 'When we do so, a revolution will break out, not only among the civil population at home but also among the Indian Army which is now standing under the British flag.'

For the soldiers of the Indian Army Bose was a man who combined the direct vision of a commanding officer with a remarkable knowledge of world affairs; for the officers his technical knowledge and grasp of military matters were a revelation – and his warmth and friendliness touching. Officers were always welcome at his home; often he would play badminton with them and give them his own clothes to change into, and he would even hold the soap or towel for an officer who was having a wash. For the civilians, used to timid pressure-group politicians, here was the real thing: a politician who knew what politics were all about, had fought with and against the best in India, had conferred with Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo, and yet spoke a language readily understood.

All this was helped by his style. He had quickly discarded his flowing silk suits for an imposing military uniform: khaki tunic, forage cap and knee-length military boots, even in the hottest weather. Whenever he travelled he demanded all the rights and privileges of a head of state. On his road travels in Malaya, for

instance, he insisted on a full ceremonial escort: Japanese military jeeps mounted with sub-machine guns, a fleet of cars, and motor-cycle outriders. On his travels to Thailand, Burma and elsewhere he took an entourage of a couple of ADCs, a physician, a valet, an orderly and a personal secretary.

Megalomania? Perhaps. But the Indians in east Asia were immigrants; a minority were certainly rich, but all of them suffered from the classic insecurity of immigrants. Though many kept abreast of Indian politics, they had no deep knowledge, no genuine awareness; they had to be made politically conscious if Bose was to further his grandiose plans. Pomp and ceremony were essential for this process. Bose knew that before the Indians could be aroused they had first to be convinced that Indians were inferior to none. They had lived all their lives in an alien country dominated first by the British and now by the Japanese.

In this connection Sivaram, an Indian journalist soon drawn into Bose's publicity team, tells an interesting story of how the title 'Netaji' took hold among Indians, Malays and Chinese in east Asia.

When Rash Behari Bose was preparing to hand over charge to Subhas he had thought of christening him 'Deshsevak' ('Servant of the Nation'): it would be an interesting variation on the name given to Das, Subhas' guru – 'Deshbandhu' ('Friend of the Nation') – and yet be humble and modest. But soon after Bose arrived in east Asia Hasan told Sivaram that Bose would like Indians there to address Subhas as 'Netaji'. Hasan told Sivaram, 'The role of India's Führer is just what Subhas Chandra Bose will fill.' Sivaram and Ayer, later Bose's Information Minister, discussed the title. Ayer was doubtful about it, but Sivaram, seized with the idea, saw the opportunity for an interesting exercise in scientific propaganda. In what he described later as 'a quiet and subtle way' he introduced the prefix Netaji to Subhas Chandra Bose's name in the news and comments carried by the newspapers of the Indian Independence League (the Japanese-sponsored umbrella body for east Asian Indians); a fairly well-organised whispering campaign followed, and other papers took it up. Netaji had arrived. Subhas Bose, like Gandhi, had acquired a title which would always be associated with him. In India today, to call him Subhas Bose is to reveal one's political opinion of the man.

Certainly there were excesses. Some of those who actively

opposed the I.N.A. were imprisoned, and others were turned over to the Japanese, by whom they were tortured (though there is nothing to suggest that Bose knew about the tortures). With deserters and saboteurs, too, he could be very stern.

Bose also allowed the emotions of the crowd to overrule his better judgement. In September 1943 Bose and Ayer were driving to one of the many mass rallies in Singapore. Suddenly Bose turned to Ayer and said, 'I am going to say that the I.N.A. will stand on Indian soil before the year is out.' Ayer, who was privy to most things, was stunned: had the Japanese approved? Had there been some special arrangements with Tojo to make Bose so confident? But Subhas merely smiled and said it would turn out all right. The rally was another monster affair – more than 50,000 Indians packed the vast Singapore park. Bose was at his best, and just before the end he made his announcement: Ayer could feel the ground shaking under his feet as the audience leaped in the air and cheered for two minutes.

The Japanese liaison officers present were also stunned, but in a very different way. His concluding promise was not in the original draft and, as the Indians celebrated, the officers dashed about trying to get Japanese newspapermen to kill the story. That evening they told Ayer and Sivaram, arranging the broadcasts to India, that the concluding portion of Netaji's speech could not go on the air. Ayer and Sivaram telephoned Netaji, and Bose made the broadcast himself, repeating his promise.

Late that night Bose, Ayer and Sivaram returned to Bose's house for their usual nocturnal political chat. Sivaram, due to leave for Burma, was eager to know the plans that had prompted Bose's promise. At last Bose simply said, 'Oh – it was such a huge crowd, and I felt towards the end of the speech that it was expecting something from me, something more than what I had already said.'

Symbolism, of course, had always been an essential part of Bose's appeal, and he now used it to further his revolutionary appeals. Bose's plans must be seen against the backdrop of what had gone before. The I.N.A. he had taken over was the second I.N.A., formed after the first one had disintegrated under the weight of Japan's racial and imperial arrogance, of Indian suspicions of Japanese plans, and above all of the inability of the heterogeneous Indians to work together. Its disintegration had ruined much of the work of

Fujiwara, an idealistic Japanese intelligence official, and Mohan Singh – a Sikh British Indian Army officer who had shrewdly sensed that Britain's defeat was his opportunity. By the time Bose arrived to take over the reformed I.N.A., Mohan Singh had been safely locked away by the Japanese. After some persuasion from some of Singh's erstwhile colleagues, who were now working for Bose, the two did meet, though Singh's record of that meeting – the only one available – does not show Bose in a good light. Bose told Singh that Nehru counted for nothing in India, that it was only between Bose and Gandhi. Mohan Singh also alleges that, though Bose promised to free him, he made no attempt to do so – possibly because he was not sure that Mohan Singh would support him (the Sikh had declared his over-riding loyalty to Nehru). In any event Bose ignored the first I.N.A. as if it were a bad dream, and concentrated on turning the second into a living reality.

Soon after his arrival in Singapore Bose had wanted to expand the 13,000-strong I.N.A. first to 50,000 and eventually to 3 million. The Japanese were aghast. They could at best – and then only with light arms – equip about 30,000. During his visit to Singapore, Tojo refused to commit himself to the expansion plans, and half-jokingly suggested that the 'disorderly crowd' (meaning the existing I.N.A.) should be controlled. The official Japanese history of the country's involvement with Bose suggests that poor translation prevented Bose from appreciating the drift of Tojo's argument, and that he harboured the mistaken impression that local Japanese officials were thwarting Tokyo's will.

The point is that for Bose the large army was necessary not so much for fighting as for the psychological effect it would have on the British: 'In India the British Army boasts of its military strength "10 times" more than its actual strength. Indians believe this and are being influenced by it. Now, I follow the British Army's example and would like to propagate that the Provisional Government of India has more than "30 divisions". At any rate, I would first like to create units which may be called divisions and fill in the required number of soldiers as quickly as possible.'

It was on this as much as anything else that he was basing his strategy. As he would tell Ayer and Sivaram almost nightly, 'Propaganda must be bumptious to be really effective. We must always be thinking up new things to hold the interest of the people.'

Indians were not the only ones affected by Bose. Soon after his Singapore investiture Bose embarked on a series of journeys: to Bangkok, to Saigon, to Rangoon. Everywhere he went he was ceremoniously received and to the leaders of these countries he seemed the embodiment of a nascent and welcome Asian nationalism. The Thai Prime Minister Marshal Luant Pibulsonggram – struggling with his own problems of collaborating with the Japanese – was initially reluctant to receive him, but when he did he was immediately captivated. He later told his associates, 'If you want to know what personality is, look at Subhas Bose.'

Burma is near India, and the visit was emotional. On 29 July, when he entered Rangoon, 100,000 gathered at and around Mingaladon airport to welcome him. But more significantly, Bose developed a tremendous rapport with Ba Maw, the head of the new Burmese government. Soon after Bose arrived in Rangoon Ba Maw asked him, 'What are you going to do next?' Bose stared at him for some time as if he did not understand the question, then replied, 'Why, fight, of course.' But over the next two years the two men came into closer contact. It was not always easy. For Burmese leaders struggling to come to terms with Japanese-style independence – the Japanese had retained control of all the important affairs of state and Burma was still effectively occupied by the Japanese Army – Bose and the I.N.A. introduced an extra and troublesome dimension. All Indians were subject to the Provisional Government of Free India that Bose had formed, and he mobilised the resources of some of the richest Indians still carrying on business in Burma.

Yet despite considerable friction between Indians and Burmese at lower levels, Bose's friendship with Ba Maw and other leaders remained intact. The two had agreed at their first meeting that Britain was their main enemy and that, whatever happened, the Burmese and the Indians would not fight each other. Although the fluctuations of war threatened this understanding – particularly when a section of the Burmese Army revolted against the Japanese – Bose never allowed the I.N.A. to be turned against the Burmese. In fact, throughout those years Burma was remarkably free of the anti-Indian riots that had marred Indo-Burmese relations under British rule.

To set up a Provisional Government had been Bose's main objec-

tive ever since his arrival in Japan. Tojo had agreed to it 'in principle' at their meetings in Tokyo in June and had endorsed it again when he had visited Singapore in July. Not all Japanese officials, however, agreed with Tojo, and for the lower reaches of the Japanese Army in Singapore it made no sense: it was a government without territory, without citizens and without any authority. Even for Tojo and his Cabinet it was merely part of its more aggressive propaganda towards India. On 9 October 1943 the Supreme Military Headquarters of Japan decided that, if Bose did set up such a government, it would be recognised, but not in a formal diplomatic sense: there would be no exchange of diplomatic personnel, no administration of territory.

Finally, on 21 October 1943, Bose inaugurated his government. He realised that he did not have enough men of the right calibre; most of those who surrounded him were ordinary men made extraordinary by circumstances. Ayer suggested that Bose have a Cabinet of one, with all matters apart from war and foreign affairs in the charge of departmental secretaries till such time as suitable men emerged. Bose would have none of it. That would be seen as dictatorship. In the end he appointed four ministers; there were eight military and eight civilian representatives, and he appointed himself Head of State, Prime Minister, Minister of War and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Two nights before the government was announced Bose sat down to write the proclamation. Ayer recalls, 'He took hold of a bunch of quarter sheets of blank paper, took a pencil in hand, and started writing. . . . He did not lift his eyes from the paper in front of him, silently handed to me the first page as soon as he finished it, and I walked out of the room and sat at the typewriter. . . . He never even once wanted to see any of the earlier pages that he had written. . . . In the entire script there was not one word corrected or scored out, and the punctuation was complete.' When Ayer finally presented the typed 1,500-word proclamation, Bose did not have to change a comma. It was the manifesto of the nationalist movement and Subhas Bose required no prompting to write it.

On the afternoon of 21 October the proclamation was read out to a packed Cathay cinema in Singapore. Then Bose took the oath of allegiance – breaking down in tears halfway through:

> In the name of God, I take this sacred oath that to liberate India and the thirty-eight crores of my countrymen I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life. . . . I shall remain always a servant of India and to look after the welfare of thirty-eight crores of Indian brothers and sisters shall be my highest duty.

At midnight on 23 October the government, in its first act, declared war on Britain and the United States. There was some opposition to including America, but Bose easily overrode the objection – a development that set the pattern for all Cabinet meetings: they usually lasted well into the night, but Bose's decision was final.

The same day Japan recognised the Provisional Government. By 19 November 1943 eight other countries, including Germany, Italy, China, Manchukuo (now Manchuria), Burma, Thailand, Croatia and the Philippines had recognised it; and Eamon de Valera had sent a personal message of congratulation. Not everybody was convinced, but for the great majority of Indians, Bose and his government were the only points of assurance in the uncertain world. This would be acknowledged even by the British. Within days of Japan's surrender a secret Raj memo declared:

> Bose's influence over the I.N.A. is very considerable. . . . It affects all races, castes and communities almost equally strongly. They regard him with deep admiration, respect and confidence as a sincere patriot, as an able leader without peer among the overseas Indian community, as the organiser of India's first 'National Army', as the protector of his countrymen under Japanese occupation, and as one who successfully dealt with the Japanese and was accorded by them greater respect and power than most other leaders in the same position.

On 5 November the Greater East Asia Conference opened in Tokyo. The Allies had got a lot of mileage out of the periodic gatherings of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill in Teheran, Casablanca and other exotic places. Lt-Gen. Seizo Arisue had toured Japanese-occupied Asia earlier during the year and discovered, to his surprise, that not many people believed the Co-

Prosperity Sphere was a Japanese philanthrophic enterprise – in fact quite the reverse. He suggested to Tojo that a properly arranged international conference, held preferably in Bandung, Indonesia, might convince people that Japan was not the aggressor the Allies pictured her to be. Initially Tojo had been lukewarm, but as Japan's military position deteriorated, and with it Tojo's fortunes, he decided he could do with a propaganda boost. The idea proved to be a disaster. The choice of Tokyo as the venue instead of Bandung was ham-handed, the leaders Tojo gathered were political pygmies, and eighteen days later Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-Shek met at Cairo and buried the Tokyo conference in an avalanche of high-sounding declarations about fighting for democracy.

Out of this disaster Subhas Bose emerged as the only star. Since he could not commit India to the Japanese Co-Prosperity Sphere he chose to be an observer, not a delegate. When he spoke he said that he believed in Japan's promises. This was indeed a conference of liberated nations meeting as equals, and India's fortunes would rise or fall with those of Japan. 'If our allies were to go down, there will be no hope for India to be free for at least a hundred years.' But whatever happened the struggle would go on. Many of the delegates were moved, and Ba Maw was almost ecstatic. Tojo concluded the conference by declaring that the Japanese had decided to hand over the Andaman and Nicobar islands to the Provisional Government.

For the next week Subhas Bose was the toast of Japan. The very next day he was asked to address a public meeting – an almost unprecedented invitation, since few foreigners were allowed to address Japanese audiences. This was followed by a series of meetings with various officials, including an audience with the emperor.

On 18 November 1943 Bose left Tokyo and, via triumphant receptions in Nanking, Shanghai, Manila and Saigon, returned to Singapore. Everywhere he went the aura and the glow created at the Greater East Asia Conference preceded him. As if to round off his image as a world statesman Bose now had his own special plane – a present from Tojo. But the pilot and crew were Japanese, and when Bose had suggested that perhaps an Indian pilot and crew would be most suitable, Tojo had softly said, 'My pilot will look after your safety. And who knows whether your pilot may fly in the wrong direction?' Just to make sure that no such mishaps occurred, Tojo attached two Hindustani-speaking Japanese to the crew, who no

doubt easily monitored Bose's conversations. However, when the eleven-seater plane arrived carrying large rising-sun flags, Bose ordered that the Indian national tricolour with a leaping tiger at its centre be painted on either side of the plane's nose.

But Bose could sense that Japan was on the run. Okawa Shumeii, the ultra-nationalist Japanese philosopher, asked him what he would do if Germany were defeated. 'We fight on,' replied Bose, 'and if necessary join the Soviet Union.' Okawa got the impression that Bose was beginning to think that Japan could not win the war and had started to distance himself. It was a significant pointer to Bose's future actions.

In the last days of 1943 the fight with the British that Bose had long planned for began to take shape. It is an accepted British myth that in 1944 the Japanese launched an invasion to conquer India. During the war British intelligence reported that the Japanese were planning a 'full-scale invasion of India' and since the war there have been many books describing Japan's incredible gamble to subdue India. But the Japanese were never that ambitious, and even Bose did not visualise a swift march to the Viceroy's palace. Both he and the Japanese were working along more complex lines. Bose visualised the I.N.A. establishing a foothold in India from where his revolutionary army could steadily advance into India, or at least create such a position that, whatever the outcome of the war, a free Indian state of some size would remain in India – the same sort of entity that Sukarno was able to establish in Indonesia.

For the Japanese the campaign in India was the product of many years of planning, much discussion and many disagreements. The Japanese had begun to prepare for some sort of thrust into India as soon as they had conquered Burma, but it was not until February 1943 that anything happened. In that month Britain's Orde Wingate had launched Operation Loincloth: a British infantry brigade, lightly equipped and specially trained, had penetrated the Chindwin river area, operated behind Japanese lines for two months, temporarily cut the Mandalay–Myitkyina railway line and killed some Japanese. In military terms it meant little, but for the first time British troops had taken the offensive against the Japanese, and the British press soon built Wingate up as a great 'man of destiny'. Lt-Gen. Renya Mutaguchi was outraged. This aggressive, irascible general who had engineered the Marco Polo Bridge inci-

dent which had led to the war with China in 1937 began mapping out a campaign into India. By June 1943 he had sketched out a plan: two divisions would make a determined thrust along the Sittaung–Palal–Imphal route, trap and break the British and finally take Imphal. The whole thing would be over in three weeks.

It was at this stage that Bose arrived in south-east Asia. Bose, as we have seen, had pressed Sugiyama at their first meeting in June 1943 to launch an attack through Chittagong. The fall of this East Bengal port would simply be the catalyst for the I.N.A.: the British would be thrown into disorder, and Bengal would form a ready and welcome base for revolutionary activities. It was about this time that Ian Stephens, then editor of the *Calcutta Statesman* told a Calcutta dinner party that, were the Japanese to parachute Bose on to the *maidan*, some ninety per cent of the city's inhabitants would rush to join him. Stephens' guests were not amused, but this was the assumption Bose was working on. For the Japanese, however, Chittagong was strategically impossible: the supply problems compared to those for Imphal would be horrendous, and being a port it would be exposed to attacks from both air and sea – two sectors in which Japanese strength was rapidly diminishing.

Bose's incredible success with the east Asian Indians had removed one crucial doubt: Indians – some of them, at least – would welcome Japanese action in India. There was no need to worry about hostile reactions from the Congress leaders. In August, soon after Bose's return from his whirlwind tour, two Japanese officers called on him. Both the visit and what they had to say surprised and then delighted him. The Japanese Army was preparing an offensive in Imphal and the I.N.A. would be actively involved.

By September 1943 everything seemed ready for the push that was due to start as soon as the monsoons were over. In April the Japanese had created the Burmese Area Army, under Lt-Gen. Kawabe Masakazu, and Mutaguchi was made commander of the 15th Army, answerable to Kawabe. It was a good strong team. Both men had worked together before and understood each other. In June the Burma Area Army held map manoeuvres and decided to scale down some of Mutaguchi's more optimistic plans. He had wanted a thrust far into India by September and a defensive line along the Brahmaputra river, linking with Dimpaur and Shillong on the plains of Assam. The others decided that a line along the

mountain range west of the Imphal plains would be more defensible. By September Kawabe had received instructions from the Southern Army to prepare to launch the offensive in October.

But still Tokyo – and that meant Tojo – refused to fire the starting-pistol. It had its own problems. The required infantry strength had not been built up, Japanese air power was dreadfully inadequate and there were problems in other sectors. October passed, there were more plans, more map manoeuvres and more losses of temper by Mutaguchi – who had already sacked one of his Chiefs of Staff – but still no word from Tokyo. Finally, in December, a personal approach to Tojo – who needed a success but had been unable to make up his mind about the operation – tipped the scales. Caught in the bath, he fired a volley of questions and then sanctioned the plan on the spot.

On 7 January 1944 the Imperial General Headquarters issued the formal orders 'to capture strategic areas near Imphal and in north-eastern India, for the defence of Burma'. It was another two months before the campaign would begin, but the Japanese and the I.N.A. were on their way. The same day, Bose shifted his headquarters to Rangoon. The move had come after complex negotiations with Japanese commanders, most of whom would have been happy if Bose had kept as far from the front as possible, and with the newly independent government of Burma – which, despite Bose's friendship with its leaders, was apprehensive.

But as Bose landed at Rangoon the ceremonies were punctiliously observed and the entire Burmese Cabinet assembled to receive him. For Bose this climaxed a series of triumphant celebrations, including a visit to Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. Bose renamed the Andamans and Nicobars the 'Shahid' (Martyr) and 'Swaraj' (Independent) Islands respectively, appointed Lt-Col. Loganadhan their first Indian Chief Commissioner and made as much of his visit as the Japanese would allow. He realised, however, that their transfer to his government meant little. The islands were strategically important to the Japanese navy, which had agreed to Tojo's order only very reluctantly, and, as the Japanese admiral who received Bose pointed out, the transfer ceremonies were a propaganda exercise: nothing of real value would be in Loganadhan's hands – at the most some departments of civil administration. Later Loganadhan complained to Bose how the Japanese had made his

whole existence redundant, but it was an emotional focus and it fulfilled Bose's rash promise that his people would stand on Indian soil by the end of 1943.

Even now – in January 1944 – there were problems with the I.N.A. It was, as Bose had admitted, deficient in many respects, and there was no agreement with the Japanese about how to use it. When Bose arrived in east Asia it had numbered about 12,000. His calls for more men and his visits to POW camps had netted a further 2,000 – still not enough to raise a second division. But after Count Terauchi had agreed to use the I.N.A. in the Imphal operations a 'Subhas Brigade' was formed from men of the 1st Division. It had no artillery, no mortars and no wireless or telephonic equipment; its machine guns had few belts, magazines or even spare parts, and medical arrangements were farcical – there were only five medical officers to look after 3,000 men, with limited medical supplies and no surgical instruments. 'There was also a great shortage of clothing and boots,' recalls Shah Nawaz Khan. 'Some of the soldiers had to do jungle warfare training barefooted in the most impenetrable and poisonous insect-infested tropical forests of Malaya.' But some supplies were bought with Indian civilian money and in November 1943 the Subhas Brigade was considered sufficiently trained to move to Rangoon.

Sugiyama had agreed to recognise the I.N.A. as an allied army, but that still left niggling questions, such as that of status, unresolved. When an I.N.A. officer met a Japanese officer, who should salute first? The question had led to fighting between the Japanese and Indian officers, and eventually it was decided that officers of the two armies would salute each other simultaneously. Then there was the question of military law. All other armies recognised by allies by the Japanese – Nanking Army, the Manchurians, the Burmese – accepted Japanese military law. Bose would have none of this. The official Japanese history of those years recalls:

> Bose passionately [illegible] the Japanese military police were [illegible] and the Indian people and the Indian Army [illegible] [illegible] He refused to let them exercise any power over Indian soldiers and Indian people. At last after prolonged negotiations he agreed that they [illegible] [illegible] under extremely [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

also agreed that even these restricted powers would not be exercised by low-grade gendarmerie.

Bose's biggest fight with Kawabe, however, centred round the precise role of the I.N.A. in the Imphal operations. Each of the Japanese divisions involved in the fighting was to have small I.N.A. propaganda and espionage units, known as Bahadur (Fearless) groups, attached to it, and Kawabe wanted the Subhas Brigade to be similarly split up and attached to the larger Japanese formations. To accept such a supine position would strike at the very basis on which Bose had built his appeal. Bose told Kawabe, 'The first drop of blood to be shed on Indian soil should be that of the I.N.A.' For hours the two men argued. Eventually Kawabe agreed that the Subhas Brigade would not be split into units smaller than battalions. (Later the three battalions were given specific tasks: the first was to form part of the Japanese force operating against the 81st West African Division in the Kaladan Valley, the other two were to guard the routes over the Chin Hills.) But Kawabe would not accept the I.N.A. as a spearhead: it numbered 8,000, and the Japanese were putting in 230,000.

The two men met often during the Imphal operations, and developed a warm, deeply felt understanding: Kawabe respected Bose and felt a sense of responsibility towards the I.N.A. When the campaign turned into a disaster he often shielded the worst news from Bose. However, Bose's relations with the Japanese government's civilian representatives were not nearly so cordial. Yamamoto, Bose was convinced, was not always acting as an intermediary should; and although, in January 1944, Tokyo decided to replace him by General Isoda Saburo, the relationship never recovered. In March 1944 there were two flashpoints. They concerned the formation of the Azad Hind Bank and the chairmanship of the Indo-Japanese War Co-operation Council that would function in India after the success of the Imphal operation. Both issues gave rise to conferences that lasted hours. But by now Bose was used to the Japanese technique. In Ayer's words:

> The Japanese were rather slow of speech both in the original and in the interpretation. On top of that they would go on repeating what they said, totally ignoring all arguments to counter their

assertions or opinions. I had an impression that the Japanese deliberately employed this elephantine method just to drive the other party to the point of utter exhaustion.

Bose kept his temper under check, and he was always patient: if the Japanese had come prepared for a two-hour conference, he was ready to go on for another hour, leisurely chain-smoking away. Then, just as the Japanese were preparing to leave, he would pick up a sheet of paper and say: 'Just a few small matters.' The Japanese would sit down again, thinking it would take only a few minutes more – only to find themselves involved in a full-scale discussion.

For three days they argued against the formation of the National Bank of Azad Hind. It was not feasible; top bankers had said so. Bose produced rich Indians who were ready to provide the capital and even write it off: it would cater to Indian business that other banks could not tap. But the Burmese would never agree to it, countered the Japanese. Their own state Bank of Burma was doing poorly, and a successful Indian bank would once again make them feel dominated by an Indian immigrant business class. But the Burmese had agreed to the formation of the bank, Bose replied. At last the Japanese conceded. The bank was eventually set up with a capital equivalent to 5 million rupees.

The discussions regarding the chairmanship of the Indo-Japanese War Co-operation Council were even more emotional, and foundered altogether over the question of whether the chairman should be Japanese or Indian.

Bose knew that, should the Japanese double-cross him in India, he had no physical sanctions. His only weapons were the moral fervour and dedication of the I.N.A. So, right from the beginning, he was keen to impress the Japanese with his spirit of independence. When a new Japanese Commander-in-Chief arrived in Rangoon, Bose insisted that the man call on him first, only then would Bose pay a return visit. In his situation, form was as important as substance. If everything else failed, Bose would threaten to go over the head of the local officials directly to Tojo or Sugiyama in Tokyo – or, at times, threaten to withdraw from the movement, raise his own suicide squad of five hundred men and march to the front. It was almost a replica of the Japanese tradition of total dedication and they never failed to be impressed by it. The official Japanese

historian recorded: 'His intense sense of equality and independence made him argue stoutly and vehemently against anything that encroached on Indian independence.'

On another front, Bose was struggling with the east Asian Indian businessmen. He had quickly assessed the worth of many whose businesses in Malaya and Burma, protected by the Japanese, were thriving. Though the Japanese had promised plenty of help he did not want to depend on them for more than the military essentials. If this was to be an Indian effort, the Indians must provide the money, and in Malaya and Burma there were some rich enough to do just that. Bose had set a collection target of ten per cent of Indian assets, and in the beginning had been mild and persuasive. But the hardened immigrant businessmen were immune to such persuasion; some thought of changing their nationality, others made promises they never meant to keep – and all looked anxiously over their shoulders, hoping the British would come back. Bose now revealed the sterner side of his nature. On 17 October 1943 he had said: 'I shall wait for one or two more weeks and I shall see and after that all the steps that I have to take in the name of India I shall take.'

On 25 October he asserted, 'Legally speaking there is no private property when a country is in a state of war. . . . Your lives and your property do not now belong to you; they belong to India and India alone.' The speech worked. Within the next two days 20 million Malayan dollars were collected. But the income was still too spasmodic, too bitty for Bose's plans. Boards of Management for Raising Funds were set up, to which Indians were made to declare their assets, and from 1944 ten to twenty-five per cent of the rich Indians' wealth was collected. Later, Board of Management letters saying, for example, 'I am ordered to return your present cheque for one hundred dollars and to demand from you payment of your arrears amounting to three thousand dollars within one week. . . . Failure to do so will result in your being called up here to answer for your action', became common, and later there were arrests.

The Japanese operations in India in 1944 consisted of two campaigns, each in a different sector: the one in Arakan, launched in February, was a holding operation, and the second, launched a month later in the Imphal–Kohima area, was the main campaign. Burma is separated from India by the Chin Hills – an extension of the Himalayas, though their saw-toothed ridges are not quite as

high as the Himalayas themselves. The terrain consisted of thick jungle, innumerable streams that with the onset of the monsoons became raging rivers, and jungle paths and trails just sufficient for the odd traveller and the more natural inhabitants of the jungle. The terrain was so difficult that till 1942 there was not even a proper railway connecting Burma with India, and all travel took place along the rivers. By 1944 the British, the Americans and Japanese had constructed roads broad enough and wide enough to carry military supplies, yet the terrors of the jungle remained: malaria that claimed at times more men than the actual fighting, various forms of jungle disease – particularly the terrible Naga sore – and a state of mind called 'jungle happiness': men became listless, preferred the jungle to crowds and cities and often unloosed artillery bombardments in the belief that a sniper had been sighted.

Imphal is the capital of the state of Manipur, which separates Assam from Burma. Three thousand feet high, it is a plateau surrounded by high mountains. In 1944 its access to Assam and India lay through the small rail-head of Dimapur, whence a single-track railway meandered down to the plains. Dimapur was connected to Imphal via the steep Kohima road. Today, though a lot has changed and Imphal and Kohima are capitals of separate states within India, the best means of communication between Bengal and the two towns is still the aeroplane. By the time the Japanese poured across the Chin Hills, the British, using the near-slave labour coolie force of the feudal tea-planters, had vastly improved the Kohima road, but even then it would prove inadequate and in the end air support was to be the crucial factor.

Arakan – a coastal plain about a hundred and fifty miles long and fifty miles wide – is outside the mountain range that forms the Indo-Burmese border. Though parts of the plains are cultivated, much of it is covered in jungle, and the monsoons there, as in Imphal, were an experience few forgot. In both areas they began in May and lasted until September, bending everything to their will: the jungle became greener, roads were washed away, tracks became mud and rivers became torrents of flood-water. Not far from Imphal is Cheerapunje, the wettest spot on earth, with a rainfall of 400 inches in a year. The only difference between the two areas was that Arakan was a bit more pleasant during the summer: in Imphal summer temperatures of 120 degrees were not uncommon. These

conditions affected both armies and to a great extent dictated their actions.

On 15 January 1944 Lt-Gen. Hanaya, the Japanese Army commander in Arakan, ordered Major-General Tohutaro Sakurai, commander of the 55th Division, to launch the Arakan diversion. The division had been organised into three task forces, each named after its commanders – the Tanabashi force, the Kobe force and the Doi force; each of them had a 200-strong Bahadur unit of the I.N.A. specialising in propaganda, sabotage and subversion. The Japanese objectives were to engage the two British Indian Army divisions, the 5th and the 7th, divert British reserves from Imphal to the Arakan and inflict as much damage as possible on the British. It was a daunting task. Sakurai had not only to defeat them but to do so quickly enough to use their supplies for his own needs: he was carrying only seven days' rations.

Yet it began brilliantly – thanks to Major L.S. Mishra, the I.N.A. Commander in Arakan. His Bahadur unit successfully won a vital British outpost manned by British Indian mercenary soldiers. On 4 February the Tanabashi and Kobe forces took Taung Bazar, swept round the Ngakyedauk Pass, trapping the 7th British Indian Division. On the morning of the 7th the headquarters of the 7th at Laung Chaung were attacked. The Japanese advance had been so swift that the Divisional Commander, General Frank Messervy, was still in his pyjamas when they arrived. He managed to escape, but supplies had to be abandoned, and some of the Japanese soldiers had an excellent breakfast in the officers' mess. Hanaya had planned to annihilate the 7th Army by 11 February, using the tactics that had worked so brilliantly during the Malaya and Singapore campaigns: seal off a division, and then, as it tried to break through, cut it to pieces. But, contrary to Japanese expectations, the British chose to stand and fight, rather than to run away as they had done so often in the past. Moreover, with Japan's air force unable to intervene in strength, the British were able to keep up an almost continuous stream of air supplies.

By mid-February superior British air and ground strength had begun to turn the tide: it was now the Japanese who were encircled, and by March both Delhi and Churchill were claiming a great jungle victory: the Japanese had suffered over 5,000 casualties, Sakurai's armies had begun to retreat back to Burma and almost for

the first time the Japanese soldiers were surrendering. Yet it was not as grand a success as the British painted it: it had taken five divisions and an enormous airlift to hold off 12,000 men, the British had suffered 8,500 casualties, and Slim, the British commander, had committed his reserves to the diversion. It was this last news that Mutaguchi had been waiting for.

Bose had already been discussing aspects of the Imphal campaign with Japanese commanders. On 24 January Colonel (later Lieutenant-General) Katakura, Chief of General Staff of the Burma Area Army, had met Bose and revealed that the Japanese intended to bomb Calcutta. Bose was appalled, and succeeded in convincing the Japanese that the almost certain political losses would far outweigh any military gains. Other plans, however, were approved. A few days later Kawabe summoned Shah Nawaz Khan and told him that the Subhas Brigade would be the first I N A troops to see action. The Japanese were putting them on trial; they would be subject to the severest tests, and if Indian arms were to liberate India his men must come through victorious. For days before the brigade left for the front Bose was constantly with them, and on 3 February 3,000 soldiers stood in full military kit to hear a final rousing appeal from him.

It seemed everything was going well. In mid-February Bose had dinner with Mutaguchi and Fujiwara. The general could not have been more confident. Not only Imphal but the plains of the Brahmaputra were there for the taking. Bose was overjoyed. 'If the Japanese Army succeeds in the Imphal invasion and pushes the I.N.A. forward in the Assam plain, the Indian people, as well as the officers and men in the British–Indian Army will respond to the I.N.A.' That night Bose invited Fujiwara back to his house, and into the early hours of the morning sketched out his military plans and his political hopes. He was already thinking of the liberated areas and how the Provisional Government would administer them. Soon after his arrival in Singapore Bose had estimated that it would take twelve months after the I N A set foot in India to liberate the whole country. To further this he had set up a Reconstruction College, where an Indian ex-magistrate trained the future administrators and civil servants of Free India. They were to be helped by a new revolutionary party with an ideology and a programme. It would first administer the liberated areas and then,

like the Nazi Party in Germany, run the country. By now his plans were complete: as areas were liberated they would come under the Provisional Government and be constituted into provinces or states. If two liberated areas were not continguous, separate administrations would be set up, though the existing boundaries of the states of British India would be maintained. Each province would be ruled by a governor assisted by a governor's secretariat and an advisory council. The governor's secretariat would be in charge of several departments, ranging from internal affairs to finance, law, and public enlightenment, which covered internal propaganda (theatre, cinemas, literature, the press), external propaganda and education. The advisory council would consist of fifty people, half of whom would be civilians. The village would be the smallest administrative unit; ten of them would comprise a *dasgoan* (village union), ten *dasgoans* a *sarkl* (circle), and the progression would continue through districts and up to provinces or states. Special Indian currency notes and Provisional Government stamps were printed, and detailed instructions given for the reception of British Indian Army soldiers captured in Burma.

A.N. Sircar, legal advisor to the Provisional Government, was put in charge of drawing up what was called a Unification Plan for India. Sircar, a magistrate from Bengal who had come to visit his relatives in Malaya and got caught up in the war, produced a scheme which distilled all Bose's political ideas. It embraced socialist reconstruction and tight state control. There would be regulations about dress – khaki shirt and trousers for work, white shirt and trousers for leisure – and food: a spoon and fork for eating, and if fingers were to be used, only three of them. Industrial progress would be through strict state planning. In a free India Japanese firms would not be allowed to operate, though for the present the Japanese Army would have to help with food and medicines, with seed for growing crops and by reaping them. As far as maintaining the currency was concerned, Bose formed a monetarist policy.

> When inflation of currency does appear, we will have to adopt additional measures which have a deflating effect by taking off from the market surplus currency, that is currency which is not covered by goods and services and which is really the cause of inflation.

And for this, there would have to be special taxes on immovable property, higher income tax, and taxes on amusement, narcotics, tobacco and state lotteries.

So, as the Imphal operations began, Bose set the Free India government in motion. Mutaguchi had said that there would be no Japanese military administration in the liberated areas, and on 16 March Bose named Lt-Col. Chatterji, who had been busy collecting funds, as 'Chief Administrator of Occupied Territories'. The I.N.A. carried a proclamation addressed to the brothers and sisters in India calling for their co-operation; however, this also listed ten hostile acts which would merit execution or severe punishment. On 4 April, with the fighting already a month old, Bose issued his second proclamation:

> The Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) is the only lawful government of the Indian people. The Provisional Government calls upon the Indian people in the liberated areas to render all assistance and co-operation to the Indian National Army and to the civilian officials appointed by the Provisional Government.

The early reports were all encouraging and Mutaguchi had no doubts about the outcome. He had set up his headquarters in Maymyo in central Burma, nearer India, and he told Japanese war correspondents:

> I am firmly convinced that my three divisions will reduce Imphal in one month. In order that they can march fast, they carry the lightest possible equipment and food enough for three weeks. Ah, they will get everything from British supplies and dumps. Boys! See you again in Imphal at the celebration of the Emperor's birthday on 29th April.

His men comprised three divisions: the 15th, the 31st and 33rd. Two I.N.A. battalions and two Bahadur espionage and propaganda units were attached to them, and two more I.N.A. regiments joined the fighting in April and May. Mutaguchi had had his problems organising the task force. Only the 33rd was really acclimatised to Burmese conditions. The 31st, which arrived just before D-Day,

had been cobbled together from a regiment which had been virtually destroyed in an entirely different sort of war with the Americans in Guadalcanal, while the 15th was delayed in Thailand, where the local Japanese command had encountered many problems, and arrived so late that a fuming Mutaguchi had to postpone the start of the operation. On 8 March 1944, the 33rd started, and on 15 March the other two divisions followed.

As in the Arakan, the plan was simple and everything depended on speed. The 31st was to cross the Chindwin at the northernmost point of the operations, capture Kohima and then move south towards Imphal to help the 33rd – the main striking force; while the 15th would cross the Chindwin lower down and complete the encirclement of Imphal. And as during the Arakan campaign, the advance was swift. By early April the 15th and the 31st had covered more than 150 miles and were already fighting on Indian soil. The 31st had made swift progress towards Kohima, and on 6 April Japanese radio confidently claimed that Kohima had fallen. (There is conflict between Japanese and British military records about the fate of Kohima. Japanese historians assert that Kohima did fall to their army; the British only admit that Kohima underwent a severe siege and that certain parts were occupied.)

For the Japanese, everything was won. The fall of Imphal was only a matter of choosing a date; though the Indians favoured 21 April, commemorating the day the Provisional Government had been formed, the Japanese opted for the 29th – the emperor's birthday. In their eagerness to claim victory, the Japanese released one photograph which showed, they said, a group of I.N.A. soldiers entering a Manipur village carrying a photograph of Netaji and being enthusiastically greeted by villagers. The Azad Hind newspapers gratefully published the photograph, but an alert reader recognised a lane in the Bukit Timah area of Singapore and the I.N.A. soldiers as cadets in the middle of training.

Already, however, the Japanese commanders had made two crucial mistakes. As early as 26 March the 33rd Division had successfully bottled up the British 17th division in a narrow valley surrounded by towering mountains. But the Japanese 215th regiment, blocking the exit, was under heavy pressure, and Lt-Gen. Yanagida ordered them to evacuate a strategic ridge which formed part of the blockade. The relieved British poured out, and

Mutaguchi and Yanagida exchanged furious cables. Yanagida wanted the whole operation re-examined, but Mutaguchi – never a man to control his temper – ordered Yanagida to pursue the enemy immediately. He eventually did but by then a week had been lost.

At Dimapur there had been an even more serious miscalculation. This, as we have seen, was the only rail-head connecting Assam with Bengal and the British source of supplies and reinforcements. At the beginning of April it was virtually undefended – Slim just did not have enough men to protect it properly, and he dreaded an attack. The sudden appearance of the 31st at the gates of Kohima had thrown the British into considerable confusion. Had Lt-Gen. Sato, the commander of the 31st, masked Kohima with a detachment and thrust violently towards Dimapur, the main supply lines of the British would have been cut. But he did not, and Slim was given time to recover. Speed and surprise, the two Japanese assets, were lost.

But whatever Sato's failures, the tide of war had turned against the Axis anyway: the Russians were about to enter German territory, Italy had fallen and the Japanese themselves were continually being pushed back into the Pacific. Imphal mirrored this Allied resurgence. 155,000 British forces faced a combined Japanese–I.N.A. strength of between 95,000 and 96,000 (the Americans calculated the lower figure, the British the higher one). At Imphal itself, the Japanese could muster at best 61,000 troops against the 90,000 fielded by the British, and in the air they were hopelessly outnumbered. Soon after the Imphal operations started the Japanese Burma command had been forced to divert virtually all its air strength to the Pacific, and Lt-Gen. Tazoe, commander of the 5th Airborne Division in Burma, had pleaded with Mutaguchi and Kawabe to stop the campaign.

The troops had left Burma with three weeks' rations, and once Mutaguchi's Imphal-in-a-month deadline had come and gone the Japanese were on the defensive. Even as they advanced, enemy planes roamed their rear areas at will, destroying roads, disrupting communications and inducing that sense of inferiority which is fatal in battle. By the end of April all divisions were frantically cabling headquarters about their problems: battle-strength had depleted by forty per cent, there were no anti-tank weapons and food and supplies had run out. As Sato put it: 'The 15th Army Headquarters

(Mutaguchi) sent me orders, but no food or ammunition.'

Sato's doubts were shared by some in Tokyo's Imperial General Headquarters, but Tojo's political survival depended on a successful Imphal operation. So the battle which even Slim in his memoirs found difficult to describe, continued, swaying 'back and forth through great stretches of wild country; one day its focal point was a hill named on no map, the next day a miserable unpronounceable village a hundred miles away. Columns, brigades, divisions marched and counter-marched, met in bloody clashes, and reeled apart, weaving confused patterns hard to unravel.'

By now, the monsoon was already more than month old, having arrived early and in great force. The inadequate Japanese supply lines had almost disappeared, and soldiers were surviving on rice mixed with jungle grass. But withdrawal was not a word a Japanese commander could utter lightly, and Kawabe, for his part, had promised to commit double suicide with Bose if the operation failed.

Finally, when at the end of June yet another thrust towards Imphal had failed, Mutaguchi recommended a withdrawal to the Chindwin. Though Kawabe rebuked him, he did forward the request to Tokyo.

On 8 July 1944 Tojo ordered the retreat. By then, disaster had overtaken both the Japanese and the Indians who were with them.

The total I.N.A. involvement in the Imphal operation was never more than 8,000 men, and for the Japanese commanders the I.N.A. was only an untried guerrilla army. Shah Nawaz pictured its predicament well in his report to Bose in April:

> When this regiment was raised, I, as well as every single soldier of this regiment, were [sic] of the conviction that we shall form the spearhead of the advance into India, or we shall be among the very first troops to enter into Indian territory. . . . When we actually arrived at the front line, the type of duty that was given to us was: (a) road-making or preparing, (b) repairing bridges, (c) extinguishing jungle fires, (d) driving bullock carts carrying rations for the Japanese troops. . . . duties of a labour battalion.

And by April, men of the regiment were already living on jungle flowers and grass.

In mid-May Shah Nawaz was suddenly told that his regiment would at last see some fighting. Palel had fallen, Imphal was about to fall and he was ordered into the Kohima sector in support of the Japanese 31st Division. It meant a route march of hundreds of miles through the Chin Hills and the Kabaw valley – some of the roughest terrain in an area where no terrain was easy – up to Ukhrul, near Kohima. But by the time Shah Nawaz and his men had reached Ukhrul, the 31st was retreating from Kohima, and the Indians were soon marching back to Tamu and eventually, in early June, to the Burma side of the Chindwin. Many had died, some had deserted; only Shah Nawaz and his staff officers had got beyond Ukhrul, and that only for reconnaissance.

The story of the main force of the I.N.A. 1st Division – the only other unit of this army to see action – was even more tragic. They had reached Rangoon from Malaya in March and Bose had easily persuaded Kawabe to attach them to the Yamamoto detachment fighting in the main Palel–Imphal sector. The division, under the overall command of Colonel Mohammed Zaman Kiani, was split up into a Gandhi Brigade, commanded by his cousin Lieutenant-Colonel Inayat Jan Kiani, and an Azad Brigade under Lieutenant-Colonel Gulzara Singh. In mid-April the Kianis were told by the Japanese to advance with all possible speed to Palel. It was too late, said the Japanese, to take part in the battle for Imphal: it had fallen or would fall in a few hours – but they could participate in the celebrations that would follow. Speed was of the essence if they wanted to do that, and there was no need for heavy equipment. So the Gandhi Brigade abandoned all its heavy baggage, machine-guns and even hand-grenades, and the men, anticipating the joy of standing on Indian soil, marched off with a blanket, a rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition each.

When they reached the battle area, they found that Imphal had not fallen, that the British supplies available there were a mirage and that they were required to attack Palel with nothing more than their faith in their revolutionary arms. They fought bravely, but it was suicidal: the British at Palel occupied the best ground and were massively entrenched, and the Gandhi Brigade suffered terribly. Many in the regiment were ill (particularly the civilian recruits from Malaya and Singapore) and the men had not eaten for three days, but seven times on the night of the 2nd they attacked the Palel

aerodrome: every time they were beaten back with heavier casualties. By 4 May, their fighting strength gone, they withdrew to Khanjol, their base. The brigade, and the Yamamoto detachment, held out in this sector in the most appalling conditions for another eighty days.

The Azad Brigade, though it did the best fighting of the entire I.N.A. 1st Division, probably stood up better. However, it did not reach the front till the end of May, when the situation was already hopeless, and by mid-July, like the Japanese, it was concerned with withdrawing to Burma.

In late June Kawabe had met Bose and told him of the decision to withdraw. But Bose – still displaying robust confidence – asserted;

> We will not repent even if the advance of our revolutionary army to attain independence is completely defeated. Increase in casualties, cessation of supplies, and famine are not reason enough to stop marching. Even if the whole army becomes only spirit, we will not stop advancing towards our homeland.

During the conversation Bose offered him the Rani of Jhansi Regiment – one composed entirely of women – but Kawabe had not even reacted to the offer.

In his public statements Bose still kept up a defiant front. More decorations were announced, special days in honour of heroes were commemorated and the Imphal defeat was seen as a tactical retreat the better to prepare for a future round: the I.N.A. had defeated the enemy in 'every battle', and only unexpected heavy rain had washed away the chances of certain success in Imphal.

> As soon as all our preparations are complete, we shall launch a mighty offensive against our enemies once again. With the superior fighting qualities, dauntless courage and unshakeable devotion to duty of our officers and men, victory shall surely be ours.

Was this perhaps the moment, as his critics have alleged, that Bose lost touch with reality? Fighting with an army of spirit, offering to throw women, who till recently had been housewives, into battle, refusing to acknowledge that Imphal was a disaster?

Shortly after the end of the war Fujiwara, after praising many of Bose's qualities, wrote:

> The standard of his operational tactics was, it must be said with regret, low. He was inclined to be unrealistic. For instance, without being familiar with the actual fighting power of the I.N.A., he was always demanding it to be employed in a separate and decisive operation on the Imphal front and, in July 1944, when the tide of battle had turned and the Japanese Army had retreated, he urged that although the Japanese might retreat, the I.N.A. should continue to confront the Allies until their aim was attained. He was temperamental and had strong likes and dislikes. . . . It cannot be said he possessed much magnanimity or very much tolerance for the opinion of others.

Admittedly Fujiwara wrote this when a prisoner of the British, unsure of his fate, but certainly Bose's reading of the war situation was debatable. From Berlin he had declared that what mattered were not the sea battles over fuel and supplies, but the land wars; later he would dismiss the invasion of Italy and the landings at Normandy as of no consequence, and right till the moment of Japan's surrender he never, at least publicly, renounced his faith in a Japanese victory.

But hindsight is easy and, as far as Imphal was concerned, the reasons Bose gave for the defeat – failure to take Imphal before the monsoons began, and lack of air support – have been confirmed in the historical perspective. Besides, his words must be judged in the light of his over-riding concern: military victory was only part of the immense psychological and political victory he was seeking. A few thousand Englishmen ruled a country of millions in the confidence that Indians could never envisage a British defeat. It was this attitude that Bose was seeking to destroy: success at Imphal would have meant that Indians, for the first time, would have seen Britain beaten on the soil of their motherland. And even the official British history of the war against Japan conceded that Imphal's fall might have led to 'a revolt in Bengal and Bihar against British rule in India which might well have been on a far greater scale than the riots of 1942.'

After Imphal, it was all the more necessary to keep the fighting

talk up. The east Asians he had organised had been immigrants only a short time ago: their politicisation was recent, their revolutionary fervour capable of sudden change. To concede defeat would mean the end. So, as Bose toured north Burma in September 1944, visiting the I.N.A. front line – or such of it as remained – he sought to re-kindle and preserve the revolutionary instincts he had nourished. But everywhere he went the men told terrible stories. Some had committed suicide rather than endure more of the dreadful route marches, and now the survivors faced wretchedly inadequate hospitals: the patients had faces distorted and swollen by beri-beri and uncared-for gunshot wounds which had turned septic; in Maymyo a single nurse looked after eighty-five patients.

Worse still, for Bose, was the psychological defeat his men had suffered. His whole campaign had been based on the premise that when the I.N.A. confronted the Indian mercenary army of the British, the latter would not fight. Mercenary would meet revolutionary, be converted and become a revolutionary himself. Instead, the revolutionary had reverted to his comfortable mercenary status. I.N.A. soldiers took to looting from local tribes.

For all their jibes about the I.N.A.'s being a puppet army and a collection of JIFC (Japanese-Inspired Fifth-Column) activists, the British had prepared quite meticulously for the day when their Indian soldiers would meet the I.N.A. Some time in 1943 a counter-propaganda unit was set up in the newly created South East Asian Command. It concentrated on psychological warfare, and from the beginning of 1944 carried out intensive campaigns via leaflets, weekly news-sheets in Japanese, Burmese and Indian languages, and of course, broadcasts. During the Imphal operations all this was reinforced by the liberal air-dropping of safe-conduct passes signed by General Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief of the British Indian Army, promising 'excellent food, clothing and medical attention' and, instant forgiveness 'if you tell our military or non-military officers all that is true as you come to them'. Also, all details about the I.N.A. were kept from the Indians. The I.N.A. were constantly portrayed as ignorant dupes of a bestial, cruel race, and Bose as a quisling out to impose his own rule under Japanese tutelage. There was strict censorship of news about I.N.A. participation in the Imphal operations.

This was so successful that 715 I.N.A. soldiers deserted. Bose

never really recovered from this shock. On his return to Rangoon, he rounded on some officers: they were lazy, more concerned with their own luxuries than the welfare of their men; it was, he said with some justification, their lack of leadership that had brought about this catastrophe. He asked other officers what should be done. Should each soldier be given the power to shoot anyone who wanted to desert? No, replied the officers, but in the weeks and months ahead it was this desperate remedy that would appeal to Bose.

His other thoughts were now concentrated on finding an alternative to Japan. Despite his public and sincere belief in an eventual Japanese victory, Bose had begun to look to the only other power which could possibly help him: Russia. Sometime before the Imphal retreat began, Bose had had dinner with Vice-Admiral Kan-ei Chudo, commander of the Japanese naval forces in Burma. The vice-admiral had already written off the Imphal adventure, but wondered if Bose might consider a re-run of it – this time from the Russian side of the border in central Asia. 'The Soviet Union now has a non-aggression pact with Japan. If you are so inclined, I shall be pleased to do everything, even to personally escorting you to Samarkand or Tashkent.' In all the vicissitudes of the war, Russia was one country Bose had never criticised. Now he sat silent for a few minutes, then asked Chudo to get it endorsed from Tokyo. A month later, Yamamoto made much the same suggestion, and Bose again showed interest. But Tokyo, in the middle of using – or trying to use – the Russians to mediate with the Allies, showed no interest.

Soon, however, Bose himself had a chance to pursue the idea. Following the fall of Saipan, Tojo resigned and was replaced by Koiso. Bose immediately sent a telegram promising full support in the war effort and offered 50 million yen to meet the expenses of manufacturing weapons for the Japanese army and navy. On 9 October 1944 Koiso invited Bose to Tokyo. He arrived there on 15 November. In discussions with Koiso and others it was agreed the Japanese would provide for 35,000 troops and Bose for a further 15,000. Bose also wanted free access to forward areas during the next round of the fighting. Japanese failure to allow this, he argued, had been one of the causes of the Imphal debacle.

Perhaps his most important achievement was to negotiate a loan

agreement with the Japanese. Whatever monetary help the Japanese gave the Indians would be repaid when India was free; none of it should in any way hamper the independence of Free India. The Japanese were impressed with the stress Bose put on this point. Before his visit, he had been told of Japanese government plans to honour him with the Order of the Rising Sun. To the horror of the Japanese, he declined; until India was free he could not accept a foreign order. His efforts to contact the Russians, however, left the Japanese even more perturbed. They gave him no help, and at last Bose tried contacting the Russians direct. One night, returning to his hotel from yet another meeting with the Japanese, he quickly wrote a note for the Russian ambassador and asked one of his assistants to take it to him. A few hours later, the assistant returned dejected: the ambassador had not even bothered to receive him, and his secretary had returned the letter unopened.

Bose returned to Burma in late November and was faced with the problem of keeping his movement together. The Indian Independence League was now in disrepair. Recruitment in Singapore had fallen from nearly 10,000 in April to a little more than 500 in November. The Indian merchants, always reluctant to pay, were now even more confident that, if they delayed just that bit longer, the British would arrive; collections in Malaya, which in April had totalled 2 million dollars, were in November only a little over 600,000. Large amounts were outstanding in Singapore although, when Netaji's birthday was celebrated, he was – much to his distaste – weighed in gold, and jewellery of almost one and a half times his weight was collected.

Fund-raising, however, could now make no difference to the wider conflict. In the last three months of 1944, the Japanese had been steadily pushed back to the banks of the Irrawaddy. On 3 December the British had landed at Akyab, which Bose had once considered a staging post on the way to Chittagong. A few days before the birthday celebrations, the 25th British Indian Army Division had landed in the Maybom peninsula.

By the middle of January, the Japanese were struggling to hold on to their defences on the Irrawaddy river. Here the rebuilt I.N.A. was planning its second campaign. Some of the lessons of Imphal had been learnt. The new soldiers had been kept from the survivors and freshly indoctrinated with tales of I.N.A. heroism. Company

commanders had been told to examine and report on the men's spiritual fitness. Yet, even before the I.N.A. had joined this fresh battle, orders had had to be issued against desertion.

The I.N.A. were holding a twelve-mile sector beginning at Nyaungu; but, until they could consolidate their position, the entire front lay wide open. On 14 January the British crossed the Irrawaddy fifty miles north of Mandalay. The Japanese assumed that this was the main line of advance and concentrated their forces there. In fact Slim's real destinations were Nyaungu and then Meiktila, and even before the I.N.A. commander, Major G.S. Dhillon, could establish himself, the British struck. By 16 February they were in control of Nyaungu and Pagan, and the I.N.A. could only join the Japanese in barring the way to Meiktila.

Two days after Nyaungu fell Bose left Rangoon for the front. On 20 February 1945 he arrived in Meiktila. Neither the Japanese nor the Indians knew quite what was happening. All along the front, heavy fighting was raging. The British had taken Mandalay and now threatened Meiktila, which was the rail- and road-communications nerve centre of the Japanese Army in Burma: its fall would mean the virtual end of Japanese resistance on the road to Rangoon. Bose's assistants pleaded with him to leave Meiktila, but he would not hear of it. The Japanese and the I.N.A. had a stronghold on Mount Popa and Bose was determined to go there. Eventually, Shah Nawaz persuaded him to stay at Meiktila while he himself investigated the situation. He returned on 25 February and that night, in an open field brilliantly lit by moonlight, there was a furious argument.

Bose said he wanted the I.N.A. to die fighting like heroes. The Axis might be beaten, but the I.N.A. must leave behind a legend of bravery and heroism that would make Indians proud and arouse them to further action. As they were talking, a Japanese officer arrived and informed them that a powerful British tank and armoured column had broken through the defences near Pyinbun and was advancing on Taungtha, only forty miles north of Meiktila. There were no Japanese troops between Taungtha and Meiktila, and forty miles for a powerfully supported armoured column was a mere two hours' journey. Bose must leave at once for Pyinmana, where there were better defences. For Bose, who had repeatedly asked his men to give their blood, this was anathema.

Now, more than ever, he was determined to go to Popa. Shah Nawaz tried to reason with him and at last lost his temper, but could not shake Bose. Eventually, with the help of some of Bose's entourage, he devised a delaying plan: a letter that Bose wanted took hours to be typed, Bose's driver started muttering about engine trouble and soon it was daylight and no travel was conceivable.

Bose was persuaded to rest in a hut for a few hours, and a Japanese official accompanying him went to get information. He returned with grim tidings. A British mechanised brigade had arrived at Mahlaing – only ten miles away – and not only was Popa probably isolated, but Meiktila itself was doomed and the Rangoon road probably blocked. Bose faced a choice of being trapped in Meiktila or taking his chance and fighting his way back to Pyinmana.

He decided to fight his way back if he could. The only transport was a small car that could at best accommodate four people. Bose, his doctor Colonel Raju, Shah Nawaz and Major Takahashi, the Japanese official, got in. Shah Nawaz filled the car with grenades and ammunition, the Japanese rode on the footboard with a loaded tommy-gun in hand, Raju sat next to the driver clutching two hand-grenades and Bose, a tommy-gun in his lap, sat in the back. It was a journey that seemed to last a lifetime. At the small Indian village of Indo they missed, by a few minutes, British fighter planes machine-gunning the place. They hid in a cactus hedge near the village, but a suspicious Burmese spotted them; they retreated to thick jungle a mile away, and within minutes British planes started circling the cactus hedge. They survived the day in the jungle, living on gram that Shah Nawaz had fetched from a field nearby.

At last Bose proceeded towards Pyinmana, arriving there on 27 February. Next day he called together the I.N.A. commanders and the Japanese present. During the retreat, his men had seen him resting in a hammock fixed to the trees, reading a book. Now he told them he had been re-reading the history of the Irish independence struggle.

> Though all the determined fighters of that freedom were killed, their spirit continued to live seventy or eighty years. Today we see Irish independence as a fact before our very eyes. I am greatly inspired by that example. If the present situation continues it is difficult for Burma also to foresee its future. Therefore, here at

this place I shall fight leading the 1st division and die. Being sure that the spirit of independence will live among Indians I shall wage the last decisive battle here.

The Japanese were horrified. Shah Nawaz and Mohammed Zaman Kiani were more respectful, and, after they had promised that they would defend Pyinmana to the last man, Bose was persuaded to leave for Rangoon. Before he did, he organised a new X Regiment, cobbled together from the remnants of the 1st Division. This was now to hold a defensive position at Yezin, a few miles north of Pyinmana.

Bose had barely settled back in Rangoon when his worst fears were confirmed. Four senior staff officers of the I N A. unit at Mount Popa had deserted, and the British were already air-dropping leaflets signed by them urging their comrades to follow their example.

The old fears that had haunted him ever since the defeat at Imphal returned. Popa was a personal failure. Perhaps, if he had followed his own instincts and had gone there, this would not have happened. For days he stayed in his Rangoon bungalow, seeing no one and even having his meals sent up to his room. Finally, after days of brooding, he emerged. Outwardly he was calm, but desperation marked his actions. Nearly 5,000 I N A. officers and ranks were assembled in Rangoon and harangued for over four hours; anti-traitor days were ordered to be celebrated in all camps and prizes given for the best dramas. Finally, in two special orders of the day, Bose at last instituted a scheme he had been long thinking of. Soldiers were given the right to shoot any officer who looked like deserting.

But though his actions – several commanders, too, were relieved of their duties, and others were arrested – stopped the defeatist talk in Rangoon, it was a temporary relief. The men who had deserted were some of the finest soldiers who had fought courageously and with determination. Now they had left behind others who doubted the very purpose of the fighting. Lt-Col. Sahgal who, during the earlier fighting, had recorded that discipline and morale had gone and that the soldiers wandered round giving his position away, analysed the feelings of the men.

> Turkey's alignment alongside the anti-Axis powers has had a very adverse effect on certain Muslim officers. . . . The officers feel that by fighting against powers that are allied with the Turks, they are being disloyal to Islam. . . . There is a general feeling among the officers and men of the unit that it was useless to continue fighting against the enemy, so superior in numbers and armaments, and helped by the traitors, who had gone over to his side. A majority of these officers, under normal circumstances, would never have done anything treacherous, but finding themselves so overwhelmed, they did not have the moral strength to continue the struggle and decided to save themselves by going over to the enemy.

Shah Nawaz's diary for April and May, too, records the dismal picture:

> April 2: This day started with unpleasant shocks. Signal Officer No.2. Regiment deserted. Captain Mohammed Hussain and his Adjutant deserted from No.4. Regiment. Went and met Col. Sahgal at 0200 hours. Learnt that his trusted officers were deserting. April 4: He (Sahgal) reported that most of the men including battalion commander Jhajeen Shah have deserted. Only approximately one coy is left of that Bn. Men have taken away their arms with them. Our men fought bravely, but soon after the attack they started walking over. It appears they have had enough. May 5: 0700 hours. The discipline and morale of troops have deteriorated, no control, officers are leaving the men. May 7: 0800 hours. After travelling all night reached a village ten miles south of Taikchi. Discipline and morale of troops is completely gone. One soldier fired at Col. Dhillon but luckily missed. He was put away.

Some units did fight bravely even then. Captain Bagri with about a hundred men, equipped with grenades and bottles of petrol, charged at British tanks and perished. A group of ninety-eight men under Lt. Gian Singh Bisht, armed with rifles and two anti-tank mines, engaged a British motorised infantry column of thirteen tanks, eleven armoured cars and ten trucks: hand-to-hand fighting ensued and all the men were killed. But these were isolated incidents. Nothing could stop the British advance, and the position was

worsened by the decision of the Burmese Army to revolt against the Japanese. Aung San, the Defence Minister, who led the revolt, advised Bose that the I.N.A. should do the same. Bose, aware that the Indians in Malaya would pay a heavy price if he did, refused. However, he pledged never to allow the I.N.A. to be used against San's men.

On 20 April, with the British about to take Pyinmana (they did so the next day), Bose turned down the Japanese Commander-in-Chief Kimura's request for a withdrawal. He would stay on in Rangoon with his full Cabinet and fight to the last. Nor would he allow Kimura to withdraw. But hours of furious discussions followed, in which his Cabinet now insisted that he withdraw. It was senseless falling to the British when the war was still raging and there was the possibility, however slim, of fighting again. On 23 April news came through that British armour had thrust beyond Pyinmana; now nothing stood between them and Rangoon. Bose began to make his final arrangements. He installed Major-General Loganadhan as his deputy in charge of the I.N.A. in Rangoon. Loganadhan, with 7,000 men, arranged the transfer formalities; and, in contrast to the chaos that had ensued when the British withdrew in 1942, there was an orderly assumption of power by the re-conquering British on 4 May 1945.

On the night of 24 April Bose, accompanied by most of his government and three major-generals, left in a convoy of four cars and twelve lorries. The journey was to bring out the best in him.

It was a clear, moonlit night, and as they slowly drove towards Pagu they could see fires raging all round them as the Japanese who had started evacuating a day earlier, burnt their files and records. The convoy, camouflaged by branches and leaves, had barely been an hour on the Rangoon–Pagu road when the first of many British air attacks forced it to take shelter. That set the pattern for the retreat. Pagu was an inferno – the Japanese having set fire to the ammunition dumps there – and, the day after the convoy passed through, British Fourteenth Army arrived. Air attacks made travel during the day impossible; at night the roads were clogged with Japanese lorries and soldiers struggling with heavy packs; and till they reached the other bank of the Sittang, where the Japanese were said to have mustered strong defences, there was always fear of British tanks suddenly appearing behind them.

By the time they reached the Waw river in the early hours of the 26th the convoy had lost a group of lorries that had taken the dirt road and been hopelessly mired in the mud, and Bose himself had had miraculous escapes. He had emerged unhurt after his car had skidded into a ditch about eight feet deep, and had twice been strafed – once while shaving at a wayside shelter, and later in an open paddy-field; on both occasions, looking supremely nonchalant, he had calmly lit cigarettes and brushed aside his companions' fears. Captain Mrs Janaki Thevar, one of the commanders of the women's Rani of Jhansi Regiment, found him red-eyed and glad to have endless cups of tea, but anxious and worried about the safety of his convoy. When General Isoda had come up to him at the Waw and suggested he cross first, Bose had exploded, 'Go to hell! I will not cross over till all the girls have gone across first.' With no bridges across the Waw, the girls had to wade across, holding their rifles above their heads; nobody drowned, but it was a near thing.

The next night's crossing of the Sittang was even more hazardous. By then the convoy had lost all its trucks, either to air attacks or to the mud – only Bose's car had survived; and, the Japanese having blown up the bridge, there was only a small ferry to take them across the river. With the convoy having no transport, the journey from Sittang to Moulmein became a long, weary route march. Bose marched at the head of the column carrying, like everybody else, his own pack. When Janaki Thevar at last persuaded Bose to take off his boots and change his socks, she found his feet covered with blisters. Moulmein was still thirty miles away, but Bose still refused to accept Japanese offers of a special car for him. When General Isoda came back with transport, Bose shouted, 'Do you think I am Ba Maw of Burma that I will leave my men and run for safety? I have told you repeatedly that I will not go unless my men have gone ahead.'

He had promised to be with his men in sunshine and sorrow, joy and suffering, and now that they were passing through the hell of jungle retreat, he could not abandon them. If he left them, the Japanese, concerned with getting their own men to safety, might forget them. Bose kept a careful check on their well-being. Were the sick being looked after? Was there enough food? Could the water of this or that village be safely drunk?

On 3 May Bose and his party reached Moulmein. At Moulmein

there was decent accommodation, proper food and rail arrangements to move on to Bangkok. The Japanese placed a train at Bose's disposal and arranged for goods wagons to take the other members of the I.N.A.; Bose – halting during the day, travelling only at night – reached Bangkok on 15 May. Despite the wretchedness of the journey, he had brought his men and women through: only one man was killed, though all the government records were lost.

This was not the Bangkok Bose had so often ceremonially visited. The Thai government was urgently re-appraising its status with the Japanese, and none too happy about sheltering Bose and the I.N.A. Also, the League in east Asia was now bitterly divided and virtually run down because of lack of funds. Bose, staying in a house vacated by a prominent Indian businessman, held regular meetings with his Cabinet and tried to revive the League organisation. After much persuasion, the Thai government consented to a loan – though not as much as Bose wanted. The League issued more threatening letters to recalcitrant Indians, and both in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur there were arrests of those who defaulted or who promised much but gave little. Ministers and officials were sent to various capitals to collect money and provide other possible centres of retreat should things not work out in Bangkok. Bose remained in the Thai capital, concentrating on mounting a propaganda offensive in India and on somehow getting in touch with the Russians.

But a plot had been discovered among his senior ministers in Rangoon. A minister of state for propaganda, Karim Gani, had been arrested, as had the head of Bose's secret service, and accused of organising a secret society with the intention of contacting the British. Now there were other problems, too. Bose had ordered the I.N.A. 3rd division – the only one that was still intact – to fight with the Japanese in defence of Malaya. Most of its officers were old British Indian Army hands while most of the men were recruits from Malaya. They were faced with the prospect of aligning themselves with Japanese forces who were being increasingly resented in Malaya and Singapore and of defending countries in which the Indians had no interest. As long as they had fought for India with the help of the Japanese, the local Malays, Chinese and other ethnic communities had helped and supported them. Now that they were virtually under Japanese command they found they were looked upon as part of the Japanese occupation forces, with the inevitable

consequences. Anti-Japanese units of Chinese were being organised by the Allies and these resented the seemingly total identification of the I.N.A. with the Japanese.

Also, some of Bose's ministers and advisers had doubts about his all-out propaganda efforts against any compromise settlement in India. These had started soon after the end of the war with Germany. In June 1945 most of the leading leaders of the Congress, such as Nehru and Azad, were released, and the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, invited various Indian parties to a conference in Simla for another attempt at what was described as a constitutional settlement in India. The conference, held between June and July 1945, was a fiasco and only proved that Jinnah's Muslim League now enjoyed a veto over any peaceful settlement of the 'Indian problem'. Bose, who knew his Jinnah, was not surprised.

During the previous year's negotiations between Gandhi and Jinnah, Bose had warned the Mahatma of the consequences of conceding an equal negotiating position to the League. Simla confirmed his fears. (Interestingly, Bose had clung to his belief that, in India, Gandhi was still king. He had said that only two men mattered – he and Gandhi. Soon after the Mahatma was released from prison in 1944 Bose broadcast a special message to him, asking for his blessing and concluding by christening him 'Father of the Nation' – a name that stuck.) As the Raj and the Congress appeared to edge closer to settlement, Bose began almost nightly broadcasts, imploring, arguing and pleading with political India not to compromise with the British.

The Congress leaders in India were accusing him of being a puppet of the Japanese and, as the chances of compromise brightened, Bose made sharp retorts to Nehru and Azad, challenging them to call a full session of the Congress and test their strength. Self-interest played a part in these speeches. If the Simla conference had succeeded, Bose's efforts could have been nullified, his claim to speak for an enslaved India critically damaged. The speeches, of course, followed the line Bose had consistently argued since 1941 at least: a country could win independence only by force of arms, and compromise with the Muslim League would only strengthen this reactionary, obstructive body and help the British divide and ruin India. They also reveal an acute international mind. Bose sensed that the post-war world would be socialist or at least strongly

inclined towards social-democratic systems, was convinced that Labour would emerge stronger after the 1945 elections and might even win (at a time when few in the British Labour movement dreamt of such revolutionary euphoria). Within weeks of Germany's fall he had begun to sketch out with remarkable prescience the political map of post-war Europe:

> I firmly adhere to what I have consistently said in the past – namely, that the collapse of Germany will be the signal for the outbreak of acute conflict between the Soviets and the Anglo-Americans. The whole world knows that the war aims of Soviet Russia are different from those of the Anglo-Americans. The Soviet government knows that the defeat of Germany has been due first and foremost to the heroism, tenacity and sacrifice of the people and armed forces of the Soviet Union. Consequently, the Soviet government, being conscious of its own strength, will never give in to the Anglo-American powers the post-war reconstruction of Europe. . . . neither Britain nor the United States of America, who are capitalist–imperialist countries, can produce a plan of social reconstruction which will be acceptable to the nations of Europe. Consequently, we come to the conclusion that there is no other alternative for the nations of Europe than to give trial to the experiments that have proved to be eminently successful within the Soviet Union. . . . If there is one man in Europe who holds in his hands the destinies of the European nations for the next few decades, that man is Marshal Stalin. The whole world and, above all, Europe, will therefore follow with breathless anxiety the moves of the Soviet Union in the days to come.

In May 1945 that was a remarkably bold forecast. But it is not surprising that Bose became increasingly convinced that Russia could be his only possible ally in the fight against the British. He speculated about moving to north China or Manchuria and contacting the Russians from there. But the Japanese, who had steadfastly refused to allow him access to the Soviets, saw Bose's moves as a gross betrayal. And on the night of 10 August 1945 he heard that Russia had declared war on Japan.

This was followed by even more serious news. Japan was about to surrender.

For Bose's advisers, it was the end of the world. But Bose reassured them: 'Well, don't you see?' he asked. 'We are the only people who have not surrendered.'

Returning to Singapore, his current base, he immediately plunged into three days of discussions with his ministers and advisers. On one issue he could not agree with them. They wanted him to continue his efforts to go to Russia; he was inclined to stay in Singapore and surrender to the British. It has also been suggested that Bose was by this time negotiating with Jacob Malik, the Russian ambassador in Tokyo, and that he had met Ho Chi Minh to discuss a possible sanctuary in Hanoi; but there is no definite evidence to back up these claims. However, in the afternoon of 15 August Tokyo radio formally announced its acceptance of the surrender, and at last Bose agreed to leave.

On the morning of the 16th, having appointed Major-General M.Z. Kiani as his official representative in the city, Bose left for Saigon with as many advisers and ministers as he could gather. For Bose, it was an adventure into the unknown – of the sort that he had embarked on often enough before: there had been the sudden disappearance from college in search of gurus, the escape from Elgin Road in January 1941, the submarine trip from Germany in February 1943. When Ayer, who was accompanying him, asked whether he was worried about flying in a Japanese plane after surrender, Bose quietly replied, 'Oh, I am a fatalist.' It was only days later that Ayer realised the significance of the remark.

That afternoon Bose and his men arrived in Bangkok. Again there were discussions and an endless stream of Indian callers. He also met the Japanese General Isoda, and Hachiya, the Japanese minister-designate to the Provisional Government. Bose wanted to go to Japan; Hachiya informed him that Japan would help in 'shifting him to a safe area'. Isoda was more explicit. He later told a government-of-India commission enquiring into Bose's death that 'it was finally at this meeting that Bose decided to go to Russia via Manchuria and the Japanese government promised hm monetary and other help'. Habib-ur Rahman, the I.N.A. Deputy Chief of Staff, who was also present, maintained that Bose wanted to go to Tokyo to consult the Japanese about the surrender formalities; but there is also corroboration for Isoda's account. Bose arrived in Saigon on the morning of the 16th or the 17th, depending on

whether we accept the Japanese version or Ayer's dates. Again there are conflicting versions of what happened there. According to the Japanese version Bose requested the Japanese government to help him reach Russia – or a place from where, if necessary, he could contact the Russians himself. The Imperial General Headquarters' reply was pained: after all they had done for him, how could he want to go to Russia now? He should not write Japan off yet. But when Bose met Terauchi, the foxy old commander agreed to help him. He had never much cared for the I.N.A., but he liked Bose personally and was eager to make one last gesture. 'Ah,' he is said to have said, 'the fat-headed staff in Tokyo seem to regard Bose as a Japanese subject! Tell Tokyo that I respect the free will of my friend who fought for his country.' Tokyo, preoccupied with arranging a smooth surrender and with the deteriorating situation in Thailand, where anti-Japanese guerrillas were active, did not wish to upset Terauchi and immediately agreed. Lt-Col. Shidei, fluent in English, French and German, who had already been assigned to the Manchurian Army, was ordered to accompany Bose to Manchuria. Those of Bose's legion of admirers who are convinced he is still alive believe that the Imperial General Headquarters had known for some time of his plan to travel to Russia, and were in fact eager to help him.

A bomber of type 97–2, code-named Sally by the Allies, was trundled out of its bomb-proof shelter and made ready for the flight. The journey could hardly have begun in less auspicious circumstances. The bomber was old and had not been well maintained, and the crew were dreadfully inexperienced. The captain and another crew member were not even qualified pilots, while the pilot was a non-commissioned officer: but in Saigon at that time this was the best crew Japan could muster. They were appalled when told that, in a bomber that could, at best, carry thirteen including a seven-man crew, they could have to take Bose and his six colleagues. Isoda rushed to consult Terauchi's staff in an attempt to get a more experienced pilot and to accommodate properly all the members of Bose's party. Terauchi was too preoccupied to see Isoda, but his staff told him he was wasting precious hours: Japan was living on borrowed time. No safe conduct had been arranged, and the Americans might at any time ground all Japanese flights – the surrender, after all, was already two days old.

While Isoda was pleading, a Japanese liaison officer arrived at Bose's headquarters and offered him a seat on the plane. 'Where is it going?' Bose asked. The Japanese could not explain, and Bose refused to budge: 'I am not going until I know the destination of the plane. I am not going to be rushed off like this.' He would rather wait for proper details from Isoda or Hachiya.

Within half an hour Isoda, Hachiya and a senior staff officer of Terauchi's arrived, and Bose, accompanied by Rahman, met them. It is not clear exactly what happened at this meeting. Rahman has glossed over it. Isoda has provided the only definite record. He could, he told Bose, provide only one seat on the plane. Bose is said to have replied, 'In that case, I won't go.' But Isoda was helpless.

Bose consulted with his colleagues, who, though they were unhappy with the Japanese, agreed that even if only one seat was available he should take it. Eventually, after another session with Isoda, one additional seat was secured, and Bose decided that Habibur Rahman should accompany him, though he told Ayer and one other to pack their cases and come to the airport in the hope that there might be some spare seats.

The whole group rushed to the airport. As the cars carrying Bose neared the airport they heard the deafening roar of the plane: the engines had been going for well over an hour and the Japanese were getting very impatient. The crew would not even consider the idea of two more seats in addition to the two already granted, and were appalled when Bose and Rahman started clambering aboard with about ten pieces of luggage. Bose was persuaded to drop some but, just as the plane was about to taxi off, an Indian officer rushed up and asked the pilot to stop. Another car carrying precious jewellery and gifts from the Saigon Indians was on its way and it was vital that this should accompany Bose. About half an hour later a car arrived with the precious luggage, the crew reluctantly accepted the items and at last Bose and Habib-ur Rahman were ready to leave.

The events of the past few days had been bewildering; now there was a confusing parting. Bose shook hands with the men being left behind. 'Well, *jai Hind*, I will meet you later.' Then he walked away towards the plane. Ayer was still not sure that was happening, and tried hard to control his tears. But Bose had promised his men that he would not rest content till the Japanese provided transport for them to join him, and Ayer and his companions soon began antici-

pating the moment of reunion. At about 5 p.m. on 17 August 1945 the Sally, dreadfully overloaded, left Saigon.

Here our narrative becomes terribly complicated. Every detail of Bose's last flight from Saigon to Taipeh is disputed – including whether it took place at all. For the millions of Indians who refuse to believe Bose is dead, the various reports of the flight repeated over the years by the Japanese, Indians (later Pakistanis) and others are a huge cover-up designed to conceal the fact that Bose did not die but is still alive somewhere – or dead, but in very different circumstances. In the thirty-six years that have elapsed since it took place two government-of-India-appointed commissions of inquiry have massively investigated all the evidence concerning it. Both inquiries came to the identical conclusion: Bose perished while the plane was on its way to Manchuria. The argument has reached almost theological proportions and, as I write, there are fresh demands for a further inquiry. What follows now is the story given by the survivors and accepted by the Japanese government.

The Sally landed in Tourane, a Japanese airport midway between Saigon and Hanoi, at about seven on the evening of the 17th. Because the plane was so overloaded the pilot refused to undertake a night flight. The passengers were accommodated in nearby barracks and the crew got rid of about six hundred pounds of excess weight by dismantling the six machine-guns. At five in the morning of the 18th, the Sally took off for Formosa, arriving at Taipeh airport that afternoon. While the passengers ate a light lunch of sandwiches and bananas in a tent quickly pitched for them at the airstrip, the crew checked their bomber. They were not happy about the port-side engine, but during the test run it stood up well and at about 2 p.m. Bose and his companions were airborne again. Darien was another thousand nautical miles away and the pilot wanted to complete the journey before dark.

The plane was still climbing over the runway when Rahman heard a terrific noise; he thought the plane was being attacked, but in fact it was the propellor and the engine falling off. Almost immediately the plane caught fire, dived steeply, hit a mud dyke on the airstrip and virtually broke in two. The pilot was speared by the steering gear and died instantly; the co-pilot's skull was smashed by the steering-rod and Colonel Shidei's neck was severed by a wildly swinging petrol-tank. Bose tried to get out of the front, and then,

on Rahman's advice, struggled out of the back. By then he was on fire. He was still wearing his khaki military uniform and, as he struggled out of the plane, Habib-ur Rahman tried to undo it – while a Japanese, unable to explain in English, mimicked a roll on the ground as a means of dousing the flames. By the time they succeeded, Bose was virtually naked and his body was a crisp, burnt mass of flesh. He also had terrible head injuries, and he did not believe he would survive the accident. He was immediately rushed to the local Japanese military hospital, and for the next few hours doctors struggled to save his life.

A blood transfusion was given; but Bose had been so badly burnt that nurses found it difficult even to locate a vein through which injections could be administered. Occasionally he fainted with pain, and once or twice he asked for water. An interpreter was summoned and Bose spoke to him. 'My men are following me and they should be taken care of when they come to Formosa.' 'What happened to Colonel Shidei?' 'My blood is rushing to the head. Please give me treatment for that.' He was occasionally delirious, and at one stage confused Habib with Hasan. Then, recognising him, he said, 'Habib, my end is coming very soon. I have fought all my life for my country's freedom. I am dying for my country's freedom. Go and tell my countrymen to continue the fight for India's freedom. India will be free, and before long.' He was struggling to get the words out; as Habib reached forward to hear them, there was a groan and the words became fainter. A nurse who had been watching over Bose heard mumbled words that sounded like 'quiet death. I am dying peacefully.' And then he was gone.

Rahman wanted the body embalmed and taken to Tokyo, but the Japanese raised numerous objections, particularly that they had no plane which could accommodate such a coffin. Some time on the night of 20 August, Subhas was cremated. Almost a month later, Rahman took his ashes to Tokyo, and there Ayer and Rama Murti, a long-time resident of Tokyo, arranged a final home for him. Unable to believe that their leader was dead, unsure of how the Americans occupying Japan would react, they took the ashes furtively to a Japanese Buddhist temple near Rama Murti's house. There, on 14 September 1945, in the presence of some of the young boys Bose had sent to Tokyo for training and of representatives of the Japanese Foreign Office and War Office, a simple memorial

service was performed. The urn was entrusted to Reverend Mochizuki. In a temple dedicated to the militantly nationalist Nichiren Buddhist sect, Subhas Bose had found his final resting-place.

PART VI

THE MYTH AND THE LEGEND

Though the crushed jewels drop and fade
The artist's labour will not cease,
And of the ruins shall be made
Some yet more lovely masterpiece.

A.E. (one of Subhas Bose's
favourite poems)

18

WHAT IF HE RETURNED?

It is 23 January 1981, and crowds all over India are celebrating the birthday of Subhas Bose. Politicians who have never known him, and many who fought him when he was alive, garland his statues, invoke his name and urge their audiences to follow his example. More than thirty years after his death Bose has become a myth, the alternative hero of the Indian struggle for freedom. And the banners at these meetings tell their own story. 'Subhas Bose 1897–1981'. Subhas Bose is not dead. One day he will return and rescue India.

The legends and the myths have been a long time in the making, and they express a deeper Indian unease: had he lived and returned to India after the war, he would have shaped a country far more successful than the one wrought by his rivals and successors: an India united, strong and fearless. Bose became a legend in his own lifetime, but his transformation into a myth fit to rank with ancient Hindu classics came after his death through forces he had himself tried to harness for his cause. They were catalysed through the British decision to hold a symbolic trial of certain I.N.A. men in the Red Fort of Delhi.

The end of the war saw the I.N.A. scattered all over east Asia and in deep depression. As its personnel were finally shipped back to

India they found the country ignorant of their existence and firmly under British control. 'Not a dog barked as they flew us back,' was how one officer later recalled the journey home.

But within days of Japan's defeat the British had begun to think about the I.N.A. problem. London had left it for Delhi to decide, but Delhi was deeply divided and had yet to be convinced that Bose was in fact dead. On 24 August, the day the Japanese government announced the death, Wavell recorded in his diary: 'I wonder if the Japanese announcement of Subhas Chandra Bose's death in an air-crash is true, I suspect it very much, it is just what would be given out if he meant to go underground.' He asked his Home Member, Sir R.F. Mudie, to prepare a note for the trial of Bose and the I.N.A.

Mudie could find nothing even in the extended definition of 'war criminal' that could be said to include Bose. His advisers were deeply worried about the consequences of a trial and the Home Department note he sent to Wavell acknowledged the difficulties of handling Bose. British interrogation of the I.N.A. and the other Indians in east Asia had established that, contrary to their own propaganda, Bose was regarded not as a puppet of the Japanese but as a great hero. He had dealt with the Japanese as an equal and had succeeded in creating India's first national army. Then there was his undoubted prestige and status in India, particularly in Bengal, where he 'ranks little, if anything, below Gandhi as an all-India figure'.

After listing the various measures that could be taken to deal with Bose, the report went on to discuss their drawbacks. Public pressure would not allow him to be hanged in India; the Burma government was unlikely to want to try him there; trials in Singapore or elsewhere would create just as many problems. A quick military execution was a solution, but that could hardly be defended, and the military might read it as a subterfuge to avoid the independence issue which would figure in a civil trial. Imprisoning him would only lead to agitation for his release. The report concluded:

> In many ways the easiest course would be to leave him where he is and not ask for his release. He might, of course, in certain circumstances be welcomed by the Russians. This course would raise fewest immediate political difficulties but the security

authorities consider that in certain circumstances his presence in Russia would be so dangerous as to rule it out altogether.

After several investigations the British had concluded by March 1946 that Bose might still be alive; but there was not much else they could do about it. The 25,000 I.N.A. prisoners being repatriated to India presented very different problems. Senior British Army commanders were convinced that the I.N.A. were 'traitors' and their officers a 'rabble', and that, if the integrity and the discipline of the British Indian Army were to be maintained, they should be severely punished. Some would have preferred kangaroo courts and quick executions. But the higher echelons of the Raj were not entirely convinced that this was the right policy; in any case, it was not possible to execute 25,000 men secretly. A few were executed, but for the great majority a more selective policy was implemented. They were classified into 'whites' – those who had joined the I.N.A. with the intention of re-joining the British; 'greys' – those who had been misled by Bose and the Japanese; and 'blacks' – those who had fervently believed in the cause. The whites were to be restored to their former positions in the army, the greys were to be tried, dismissed and released; only the blacks were to bear the full brunt of British revenge. They were beyond redemption, and Auchinleck was convinced that when their full story emerged the Indian public would be horrified.

The I.N.A. was already housed in camps set up in Delhi's Red Fort, and this, it was decided, would be an excellent place for a trial. The Fort was ideally situated for press and media coverage. On 5 November 1945 the trial of Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Kumar Sahgal and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon began. Dhillon was charged with murder, Shah Nawaz and Sahgal with abetting murder: all three were charged with 'waging war against His Majesty the King-Emperor of India'. The trials lasted till 31 December, and proved to be a sensation – though not in the way Claude Auchinleck wished.

The war had not brought Indian independence any nearer, and the British mistook the political quiet for approval. But almost nine months after the end of the war, when the British in Delhi held their victory celebrations, the Indians went wild with fury: the old Delhi town hall was partly gutted, Indians dressed in European clothes were attacked, parading troops were booed and the police had to

open fire in order to restore order. The I.N.A. and Bose had created a potentially revolutionary situation: one on which the political parties were eager to build for their own ends – none more so than the Congress.

The Congress had suffered a double defeat during the war: it had gained little through either negotiations or mass struggle, and now it was a case of 'the Congress proposes, the Muslim League disposes'. In these circumstances the Congress soon realised the potential of the fervour behind the I.N.A., and it quickly adopted resolutions both approving of their actions and pledging itself to defend them at the trial. A party dedicated to non-violence was at last beginning to realise the usefulness of violence.

Even Jinnah urged the government to treat the I.N.A. prisoners with 'lenency'. By now the Indian press – freed from wartime censorship – was full of stories and legends of the I.N.A. and Bose. 'Jai Hind' had replaced all other greetings between Indians, and Bose's photographs – invariably in I.N.A. uniform – now graced a million *pan* shops.

The defence was led by Bhulabhai Desai, who in the past had been a bitter critic of Bose. By the time of his death, a few months after the trial, he was as great a champion of Netaji as any. The trial became, as Nehru said, a dramatic version of that old contest, England versus India: the legal niceties vanished and even the personalities of defendants were obscured. For Indians it was not only illegal but a slur on Indian nationalism, the victors were disposing of the vanquished in the very place where the latter had planned to hold their victory parade. Besides, the three accused – Shah Nawaz was a Muslim, Sahgal a Hindu and Dhillon a Sikh – represented all the major communities of India. Auchinleck may have hoped that would stress the communal nature of Indian politics – always Britain's strongest point, but for Indians it demonstrated that the I.N.A. was indeed a national army, that Bose had indeed succeeded in getting Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs to unite for a common cause.

The defence based its argument on the host of precedents, old and new, which supported the right of subject countries to fight for their freedom. But, for all Desai's eloquence, as far as the court-martial was concerned he was arguing a lost cause – one they were incapable of appreciating, let alone accepting. The predictable ver-

dict was that all three officers were guilty of waging war against the King. Dhillon and Sahgal were acquitted of the charge of murder and abetment of murder. Shah Nawaz was found guilty of abetting murder. All three were sentenced to transportation for life, cashiering and forfeiture of arrears of pay and allowances.

However, the British military authorities had become painfully aware of the consequences of the trial. Even before it had opened, I.N.A. days had been organised in various parts of the country. The day the proceedings got under way the police had to open fire on a protesting crowd at Madura in south India. Then, as the trial proceeded, the Red Fort itself was besieged; more than a hundred were killed or injured by police firing. Between 21 and 26 November Calcutta was strike-bound. In a rare gesture of communal amity, Hindus and Muslims – their trucks flying both Congress and Muslim League flags – jointly took over the city, attacking American and British military establishments and shouting the slogans of freedom and nationalism coined by Bose. Some forty-nine military vehicles were destroyed and ninety-seven damaged, and about [illegible] military personnel injured; thirty-two Indians lost their lives and 200 were wounded. The violence soon spread along the Gangetic plain to Patna, Allahabad and Benares, and eventually places as far apart as Karachi and Bombay were affected.

Claude Auchinleck was no longer the confident Commander-in-Chief who had ordered the trial, and even as it was proceeding he wrote to the Viceroy expressing his doubts:

> I know from my long experience of Indian troops how hard it is even for the best and most sympathetic British officer to gauge the inner feelings of the Indian soldier, and history supports me in this view. I do not think any senior British officer today knows what is the real feeling among the Indian ranks regarding the 'INA'. I myself feel, from my own instinct largely, that also from the information I have had from various sources, that there is a growing feeling of sympathy for the 'INA' and an increasing tendency to disregard the brutalities [illegible] by some of its members as well as the forswearing by all of them of their original allegiance. It is impossible to apply any standards of ethics to this problem or to shape our policy as we would had the 'INA' been of our own race.

Not wishing to be caught napping again, Auchinleck set up a special organisation in his military headquarters 'to find out the real feelings of Indian ranks on this subject'. He also decided that no more I.N.A. personnel would be tried on the major charge of waging war against the King, and that only those who had committed 'acts of gross brutality' would be brought before the courts – at most between twenty and fifty men. Later Mason, joint secretary in the War Department of the government of India, declared that the I.N.A.'s 'patriotic motive would be taken at its face value and its members would be treated as though prisoners of war'.

A week before the trial ended the Viceroy empowered Auchinleck to commute sentences of death or transportation for life, and when, as required, Auchinleck came to confirm the sentences of the three men, he only agreed to the verdict of cashiering and forfeiture of pay: the transportation decision was quashed and, taking into account 'the prevailing circumstances', the men were set free.

Shah Nawaz, Sahgal and Dhillon were welcomed like the heroes of a conquering army and their tales were carried back to the remotest villages of India to be told, retold and eventually mythologised. For a time the I.N.A. seemed to have become India – even for Gandhi. Now, in his weekly *Harijan* column, he invariably referred to Bose as 'Netaji', and conceded that 'the hypnotism of the INA has cast its spell upon us. Netaji's name is one to conjure with. His patriotism is second to none (I use the present tense intentionally). His bravery shines through all his actions.' He, too, believed Netaji was alive.

The British, however, continued with the selective trials, and on 4 February 1946 Captain Abdul Rashid was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for certain acts of brutality. Rashid was a Muslim, and now the Muslim League came into the picture. For four days between 11 and 14 February the streets of Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi witnessed unique political demonstrations in which Hindus and Muslims forgot their differences and came together to fight the I.N.A.'s battles. Four days of strict martial law were required to bring Calcutta back to normal; by then nearly fifty were dead and over five hundred injured.

In January, too, some 5,200 Royal Indian Air Force personnel had gone on strike to protest over their conditions and as an expression of sympathy for the I.N.A. cause. And on 18 February a revolt

began on HMS *Talwar*, a training ship of the Indian navy moored off Bombay. By nightfall on the 20th virtually the whole of the Royal Indian Navy was in open rebellion: seventy-eight ships in the various ports of India – Bombay, Karachi, Madras, Vizagapatanan, Calcutta and Cochin, and even in the Andamans – and nearly all the shore establishments had hauled down the Union Jack. Only ten ships and two shore establishments still remained with the British. Other units of the armed forces were quickly affected. Between 22 and 25 February the R.I.A.F. in Bombay and Madras went on strike and on the 27th Indian soldiers in Jabalpur followed. In Bombay and Karachi, the main naval centres, ratings were able to generate impressive mass support. In Karachi gun battles had ensued, which continued for two days before heavy British reinforcements finally defeated the men. In Bombay there had been what even the British-owned *Times of India* was forced to call 'mass uprising . . . in sympathy with the naval mutiny . . . unparalleled in the city's history'. The communists and the Congress Left had called for sympathy strikes and over 600,000 workers from the textile mills of Bombay had responded. For almost three days they had fought running, unequal battles with British troops in the streets and lanes of Bombay. The British had tanks and machine-guns, the workers had improvised weapons and even at times stones from dug-up roads. But for a few days some of Bombay's teeming working-class slums had become 'no-go areas', and the British had had to call in white troops to quell the uprising. In the end 270 had died and 1,300 had been injured (the government's official figures were lower: 187 and 1,002).

Undoubtedly a revolutionary situation had been created. But now, suddenly, the ratings found there were no leaders. They knew their navy but they had been horribly wrong about the Indian political parties. The naval ratings had virtually given the politicians a whole unit of the British Indian armed forces; they had even started calling it the Indian National Navy. For the politicians, however, this was too alarming a prospect. Jinnah advised the men to go back and assured them that, if they did so, he would use constitutional means to remedy their complaints of bad food and service conditions. The Congress leaders were plainly frightened by the prospect of leading a revolution; Nehru came to Bombay and deplored the revolt. And as the ratings wondered what might have

happened if there had been a leader prepared to lead them – Bose perhaps – the British re-took their ships.

But if the Indian politicians had no use for revolutionary situations, the Labour government had been quick to understand the implications. On 4 December 1945 Herbert Morrison announced in the House of Commons that a ten-member parliamentary delegation would visit India to study the situation. The five-week visit took place in January and February 1946 and by the end of it nearly all the visiting MPs were convinced that India was in a dangerous state. The February disturbances convinced Attlee that the imperial tide had at last ebbed. India could be held by force of arms for a few years more, but the cost for a Britain devastated by war would be too high. The British government announced in February 1946 that a Cabinet mission of three ministers would visit India. That mission, in fact, failed in its purpose, the situation required another intervention by Attlee; it was his speech in the House of Commons on 20 February 1947 – when he pledged the British government to transfer power to Indian hands, if necessary as two separate nations, 'not later than June 1948' – that finally led to the emergence of the two nations of India and Pakistan on 15 August 1947.

That such a situation existed in 1945–6 owed a great deal to Subhas Bose. He did not precisely visualise the extent of the post-war turmoil; his wildest dreams could not have matched the fervour the I.N.A. trials produced. But he had told his men in Burma to fraternise with the Indians in the British Indian Army, and till the end he was confident that, if Indians kept up their resolve, Britain – in an increasingly hostile post-war world – would have to concede independence.

True, his army did not parade as victors in the Red Fort; but their trial as vanquished had proved that his belief in a revolutionary consciousness was grounded in a deeper understanding of the Indian people than his enemies credited him with, or even his most fervent friends believed in. The vision had been genuine: he just did not have the means, while alive, to translate it into a reality. Even Dilip, so sceptical of worldly struggles, recognised that the romance of Subhas' army had finally breached the dyke that separated Indians from the other army maintained to enslave them.

Through 1946 and 1947, as Indian leaders bartered with the British and among themselves to produce a divided India, they

appeared to be constantly looking over their shoulders to reassure themselves that Bose's ghost was not like Hamlet's father, turning into flesh and blood. The years of struggle had wearied them, they did not have the stomach for another fight and they were relieved to get what crumbs they could from the imperial table. When the Congress finally accepted the partition plan Nehru had only this consolation to offer for the sudden abandonment of a lifetime's principles:

> But of one thing I am convinced, that ultimately there will be a united and strong India. We have often to go through the valley of the shadow before we reach the sunlit mountain-tops.

It was poor comfort for the holocaust that partition produced, and even today, for many Indians, the sunlit mountain-tops are still obscured by the shadows.

Had Bose returned to India after the war he might well have prevented the tragedy. He was not a tired politician ready to accept office under any terms. Although his uncompromising hostility to Jinnah and Pakistan might have led to a civil war, the cost of that could not have been greater than the senseless waste of partition.

Certainly Bose's often repeated warning that the Congress would pay dearly for the acceptance of 'office mentality' was historically acute. It came when in the late thirties the Congress was struggling to cope with the consequences of the 1935 Government of India Act, and the blandishments it offered. In the 1936 elections, the Congress reaped the rewards of nearly two decades of unceasing mass struggle against the British and totally vanquished the Muslim League. But by 1945, after a decade of negotiations and some power-sharing with the British, the Congress was reduced to the level of the Muslim League; just another group, albeit powerful, seeking the rewards of office. And by placing such faith in the negotiating chamber the Congress had played into the hands of Jinnah, the master lawyer and negotiator. As Bose had foreseen, the Congress had thrown away the trump card of its power – mass struggle – for the dubious delights of the round table.

But could Indians have lived with Bose? An extreme man, he produced extreme reactions: total adulation or permanent rejection. Certainly the India of Bose would have been very different from the

India of Nehru. Bose had often said that India needed at least twenty years of iron dictatorial rule, and he would most certainly have rejected the type of parliamentary democracy that has developed. This opens up the whole question of whether it is better for people to have food or to have freedom to change their political rulers every five years. The argument can never be resolved – though, given the recent adulation of the West for China, some of the oldest democracies in the world seem to think food is more important.

Surely Bose's rule would have degenerated into autocracy, like that of Mrs Gandhi between 1975 and 1977? Though the analogy is not quite accurate (Mrs Gandhi's rule degenerated long before the events of June 1975), for conclusive evidence Bose's critics point to his behaviour in Germany and with the Japanese during the war. In a climate that brooked no dissent and where the leader was always right, he too came to believe that he could do no wrong.

Part of the possible reason for this change of personality – if there was a change – may lie in the fact that at that stage, particularly in south-east Asia, he found himself a king without any worthwhile courtiers. The people who surrounded him there were political innocents, thrust into the wider world by events beyond their control: they could only applaud, never interject. Bose was, as the official Japanese history puts it, 'a bright morning star amidst them'. There is also evidence to suggest that Subhas Bose was not quite the dictator a simple reading of his speeches makes him out to be. No doubt there was an authoritarian streak in him, but his actions often belied his dictatorial postures. In 1939, as Congress president, he behaved – against Gandhi's wishes – less like an autocrat and more like a negotiator who had won one round and expected to reap some benefit from it. Throughout his political career he was always loyal to colleagues even at the risk of damaging his own chances: hardly the mark of a man of iron.

Almost alone among Indian leaders, Bose offered solutions that were both visionary and practical. Nehru's socialism may have been more rounded; rigorously logical and free of Bose's celebrated eclecticism. But its strain of romanticism divorced it from the realities of India, and the Nehru years resulted, almost inevitably, in a country with the most progressive socialist legislation outside the Soviet bloc which happily allowed the most unbridled capitalism to grow and flourish on a feudal structure that had changed little, if at

all, since the British days. The cynicism this produced has bitten so deep that every government since has had to struggle against it – and no combination in Indian politics looks likely to counteract the years of wasted opportunities and lost hopes.

This may seem hard, given the undoubted economic progress India has made in the last thirty years. When the British left, India had little or no industrial capacity; now she is the tenth industrial power in the world, exporting machinery to the West and capable of producing her own nuclear weapons. But the rapid industrialisation has been uneven and ill-directed, with the beneficiaries limited to a small, if growing, sector of the country.

Bose had the capacity to inspire total love and dedication, and produce gold from dross. He was hated by many, but those he 'touched' loved him with an almost overpowering sense of completeness. And this, combined with his rigorous, matter-of-fact manner and an instinctive feel for ancient Indian loyalties, might well have produced the revolution that India needed – and still lacks. Like Turkey's Kemal Ataturk – a man he admired – Bose might well have produced a nation at once new, yet full of old virtues. This is best illustrated in his approach to women: he was not one for making strident feminist statements but, even on that submarine bringing him from Germany to Japan, he was busily telling Abid Hasan of the need to get Indian women to join the I.N.A., and how they would have to abandon their beloved sarees in order to do so. In south Asia he did get many immigrant women to join the I.N.A. – demonstrating that Indian feminism could be happily blended with the exigency of war.

The ideological development that Bose sought has never materialised. Like all national-liberation movements, the independent Congress was a coalition of business seeking to oust British capital, of rural *kulaks* confident that native rulers would do more for them than alien ones, of various interest groups and of socialists aware that the Congress was the only party capable of furthering their ideas. Gandhi did suggest that the Congress should disband after independence, but this was clearly impossible: self-interest, if nothing else, ruled it out. Today almost all the major political groups in India – communists, socialists, free-enterprise capitalists, Gandhian socialists – trace their ancestry to the Congress: only the right-wing Hindu Jan Sangh can claim a different parentage.

The absence of ideological development has meant the politics of banter, with interest groups perpetually feuding amongst themselves, extraordinary alliances – as between Marxists and religious obscurantists – and, above all, comical political defections. Once in a northern state, a single individual's change of support from Congress to opposition parties led to the fall of two state governments in a single day.

The most valid criticism of Bose is related to the nature of the nationalist movement itself. For Bose's faults – and there were many – were inevitable in a nationalist fighting a colonial–imperial power that both fanned nationalism, and denied it legitimate expression. The Raj, as Marx penetratingly observed, did unwittingly bring modern ideas into India – but the nationalist reaction it produced in India was distorted by the British presence. Pre-British India was seen as a land of milk and honey in which there had been no problems, no caste system and no evils, only genuine Indian harmony and peace. And it is a measure of the failure of Indian nationalism that what in most countries would be dismissed as delicious nonsense is still taken seriously. Today P. N. Oak, ADC to Major-General Bhonsle of the I.N.A., can claim respectable reviews in Indian papers by writing books asserting that 5,000 years ago India had an empire which included Britain. If the world has not appreciated this, it is, argues Oak, because the relevant chapters of world history have been 'lost'. Bose was aware of India's ills, but he often came close to endorsing the delicious nonsense of pre-British bliss, if only for rhetorical purposes.

Though he bravely maintained his independence from both the Germans and the Japanese – no mean feat – he deliberately avoided the wider implications of their awful philosophies. However, his argument that foreign help was required in order to drive the British out was justified by the events of 1945–6, and has been the bedrock of nearly all successful national-liberation movements since the war. In this, at least, Bose was probably far ahead of his time. In our age, when a national liberation movement's accepting foreign help from all and sundry is a common fact of life, the idea may seem of no great significance. In the early forties, for a subject non-white race even to think of any such thing was revolutionary indeed.

Lastly, 'It is our duty', Bose told his I.N.A., 'to pay for our liberty with our own blood. The freedom that we shall win

through our sacrifice and exertions, we shall be able to preserve with our own strength. Indians disillusioned with the progress made by independent India have turned to these words for an explanation of what went wrong. Freedom came too easily. And over the years Bose has become the symbol and the voice of that alternative struggle for Indian freedom. Though it contributed significantly, it did not manage to seize power from the British. But Subhas Bose—even more than Gandhi—remains the one leader who Indians hope will re-appear to rescue them from the mess the others have created. Perhaps, as Sisir Bose says, this feeling can only be understood in psychological terms. It reflects the fundamental frustration that the events of August 1947 brought to a frustration that Santimoy Ganguli, Bose's one-time associate, felt even as he witnessed the celebrations around him.

On 15 August Ganguli stood at the junction of Lower Circular Road and Lansdowne Road in central Calcutta. All around him crowds were shouting, 'Jai Hind', strangers were embracing one another and young people atop lorries and buses were waving Indian flags and crying, 'Inquilab Zindabad'.

Suddenly he felt a hand grip his shoulder. He turned round to stare into the face of a notorious CID officer from Thomas Hall. The officer was beaming and shaking Ganguli's shoulder. He said, 'Cheer up! What's the matter. Don't you know what day it is? Today we have become brothers.'

Ganguli just managed a smile and a [illegible] still does not know how he managed to [illegible].

Nothing had changed. Power had been transferred and [illegible] the jailer and the jailed had become one. This was not the freedom he had fought for. It was only [illegible] the brightest youths of Bengal [illegible] Ganguli's heavy heart lifted. The Indian [illegible] for, which his leader had so [illegible] have a successful conclusion.

Like Ganguli, [illegible]

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

ix Mountbatten as liberator of the sub-continent – see Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*.

xi Kripalani interview, Delhi, 21.10.77.
For views of anti-Gandhi nationalists see Rajani Palme Dutt's *India Today*, pp. 575–99.

xi The standard British view of Bose has been expressed by many writers: see Philip Mason's introduction to Hugh Toye's *The Springing Tiger*, and Christopher Sykes' *Troubled Loyalty: A Biography of Adam von Trott*. Luke Scrafton was an official of the East India Company and his observations are quoted in Leonard Gordon's *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement 1876–1940*, p. 6.

The Muggeridge analysis came in 'Refractions in the Character of Kim Philby' in *Things Past*, ed. Ian Hunter, p. 182.

xii For a typical 'two Indias' view see Sir Reginald Craddock's *Dilemma in India* (London, 1929). Lord Minto, Viceroy in the early part of this century, actually wrote about the Raj as fashioning a synthesis between the British and Moghul traditions of government (*Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, p. 142).

V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness*, p. 201; Nirad Chaudhuri, *Continent of Circe*, pp. 135–50.

xiii The Raj's note on Bose the 'implacable foe' is in P & J 1812 (L/P&J/7/792), India Office Records (IOR).

The Tuker inversion is in *While Memory Serves*, pp. 407–8.

xiv H.R. James was speaking to Presidency College students in July 1914 (Bholanath Roy, *Oaten Incident 1916*, p. 19).

xvi A good example of Bose hagiography is S.A. Ayer's *Unto Him a Witness*.

xvi Bose as God: Malhotra interview, Delhi, 20.10.77.

PART I: THE REBEL AND THE BHADRALOKS

1 – Muscular Hinduism

3 The entry in Janki nath's diary has been photocopied and hangs on one of the walls in the room where Subhas was born

4 The Bengali sayings are part of the folklore of the province

6 The portrayal of Janki nath as grandfather is based on interviews with Dwijendranath Bose in Calcutta, August/September 1977

Janki nath's life-style in Cuttack was recalled by Dr Radhanath Rath, who was two years junior to Subhas at school

7 The accounts of incidents from Subhas' childhood are based on interviews with Madhan Mohan Das, a classmate of Subhas, and Bina Bhowmick, daughter of Bem Madhav Das.

The start of one of the stormiest periods in Subhas' physical life is in *An Indian Pilgrim* (1965 edn), p. 31. All subsequent references are to this edn.

8 The full text of Vivekananda's 'strength through football' speech is in *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* (9th edn, Calcutta, 1964), p. 242

10 The quotation is from a Bengali memoir by Hemanta Sarkar, *Subhaser Sange Baro Bachar [My Twelve Years With Subhas] 1912–24*

11 The letter to his mother, written from Ranchi, is in *An Indian Pilgrim*, p. 126.

2 – The Rebellion

14 The words of self-reliance were addressed to Dilip Roy, who recorded them in *The Subhas I Knew*, p. 27

My presentation of the Oaten incident is synthesised from *An Indian Pilgrim*, pp. 67–71, *Netaji and India's Freedom: Proceedings of the International Netaji Seminar 1973*, pp. 28–53 (this includes Oaten's own reflections), and Bholanath Roy's *Oaten Incident 1916*

16 Letter to Hemanta, 7 4 16 (*An Indian Pilgrim*, p. 164)

17 Letters to Bholanath Roy, 12 4 19 and 1 9 19 (Bholanath Roy Collection, National Archives of India (NAI))

18 This letter to Hemanta was written from Fitzwilliam Hall, 12 11 19 (*An Indian Pilgrim*, p. 170). The subsequent letter of 21 1 20 was also from Cambridge (ibid., p. 172)

For an American view of Bose see Leonard Gordon's *Bengal*, p. 225.

19 Dilip Roy's *The Subhas I Knew* provides a rich and fascinating portrayal of Bose in London (pp. 50–75)

20 Letter of 16 2 21 (*An Indian Pilgrim*, p. 98)

21 Letter to Charu Ganguly, 22 4 21 (ibid., pp. 186–7)

PART II: THE MYSTICAL HERO

3 – At Last: The Guru

25 Christopher Sykes, *Troubled Loyalty*, p. 348.

26 Montagu's declaration is in Sir Algernon Rumbold, *Watershed in India 1914–22*, p. 89.

28 Bose's lament about Gandhi is in *The Indian Struggle 1920–34* (1948 edn), p. 80. All references, except where specified, are to this edn.

29 Hemanta describes the meeting in *Subhaser Sange Bare Bachhar*.

31 The quotation is taken from a long peroration written by Tagore in 1921 (*I Hath Called Them Differently*, p. 69).

Subhas' guidelines for the lecturers are in a letter to Bholanath Roy, 13.9.21 (Bholanath Roy Collection, NAI).

32 The conversation is reported by Das Gupta, *Subhas Chandra*, p. 45.

Basanti's recollection is in Bishwanath Dey's *Subhas Smriti*.

The famous Bose remark has been variously reported. Das Gupta records: 'It is a matter of great shame that I have been given only six months' (*Subhas Chandra*, p. 49).

33 The bewilderment of the old Chinese convict was narrated by Bose at a London meeting of Indian students held on [illegible] (*Amrita Bazar Patrika* (*ABP*), 25.1.38, p. 6).

34 Bose's speech clearly converted the reporter who wrote of his 'keen insight' (ibid.) 17.9.22 and 30.9.22).

35 Bose's speeches at the Bengal Provincial Conference are [illegible] (ibid., 3.4.23). Bose, worried about what he called inaccurate reports of his Bombay speech, wrote a long letter to the *ABP* on 4.6. [illegible] 6.6.23).

For Bose's thoughts on the esoteric appeal of Gandhi, see *The Indian Struggle 1920–34*, pp. 161–4.

M.A. Rezak, a Muslim, seconded the motion proposing Bose, saying that the Muslims considered him the second best in Bengal who was trying to help the position of the Mohammedans (*Forward*, 24.3.24). The next day *Forward* reported scenes of great [illegible] when Bose's election was announced.

37 The parting with Hemanta is in *Subhaser Sange Bare Bachhar*.

4 – The Man

38 The philosopher's muse in Subhas was released during his detention in Calcutta's Presidency Jail in November 1924. (See *Purbo* [illegible] enlarged Bengal edn of *Crosswinds*), p. 227 ff.)

39 The anecdotes are from Satya Bakshi's rich collection of some details of

Bose's personal life are recalled in *Netaji, His Life and Work*, edited by Shri Ram Sharma.

'No politics without tea' was recalled by Hari Vishnu Kamath in the *Sunday Standard*, 13.12.64.

40 I interviewed Hasan in Hyderabad in June 1978.

Leopold Fisher was the joke-master with the dud joke ('The Great White Swami', *Overseas Hindusthan Weekly*, 5.2.81).

V.B. Karnik made the point in an interview with me in Bombay in June 1978.

Subhas' relations with his nephews and nieces were described to me by Dwijendranath Bose.

Dilip's exact words were: 'He often flushed when taken unawares, like a schoolgirl caught making love' (*The Subhas I Knew*, p. 76).

41 The letter to Gandhi is dated 6.4.39 (*Crossroads*, p. 149).

For Basanti's relationship with Subhas see *Subhas Smiriti*.

5 – Enter Revolutionaries

43 This is in file no. 61/1924, section 5, Home Poll, NAI; also in file no. 379/11/1924, Home Poll, NAI.

44 The Birley letter and the government of India's response are in file no. 379/1/Poll of 1924 and K.W., Home Poll, NAI.

45 The resolution and its consequences are in file no. 308/1924, Home Poll, NAI.

46 The indictment of Subhas as a revolutionary leader is in an enclosure entitled 'Connection of Revolutionists with the Swarajya Party', file no. 399/11/1924, Home Poll, NAI.

47 Das' astounding revelation, and others, are all in file no. 379/11/1924, Home Poll, NAI. This file also shows how Bengal slowly raised the ante, and the reactions of Muddiman and Crerar, and contains the interview given by Das, the intervention of Tegart, and the final acceptance by Delhi and London of the government of Bengal's argument.

Bakshi's and Surendra Mohan's thoughts on the subject are in Gordon's *Bengal*, pp. 194, 344–5.

48 The Subhas–Dilip tête-à-tête took place in Dr Dharmavir's house on a cold Lancashire night in 1921 (*The Subhas I Knew*, pp. 199–202).

The government's admission is in file no. 379/11/1924, Home Poll, NAI.

The Deputy Commissioner's words are in *The Indian Struggle 1920–34*, p. 181.

49 Bose's versions of the libel actions are in his *Correspondence 1924–32*, pp. 3–10, 182–93.

Bose's statement to the Associated Press, on 6.6.27, is in file no. 10/68/1927, Home Poll, NAI.

6 – Jail: Guru Lost

51 The description of the Lalbazar police station is in *The Indian Struggle 1920–34*, p. 182.

The 'kingdom of dust' is in a letter to Sarat of 14.3.25 (*Correspondence*, p. 28).

The authorities' decision to ban *Forward* is in file no. 29/XIV/25, Home Poll, NAI.

52 Dilip confessed his fears about the effect of Russell on Subhas in a letter of 15.5.25 (ibid., p. 41).

Bose in turn made his confession about Bengali literature in a letter to Sarat on 7 May 1926 (ibid., p. 189).

Details are in unpublished prison notebooks cited in Gordon, *Bengal*, pp. 234–5, 354.

53 Anguish at Das' death is conveyed in many letters written at this time (*Correspondence*, pp. 41, 52–6, 65–70, 82–6).

54 The petition organised by Bose that so impressed a Raj official – T. Sloan – is in file no. 80–III–Home Poll of 1926, NAI; the file also contains various other official reactions.

Subsequent letters from Bose, and notes of jail interviews with relations and Congress politicians, are in file no. 65/X VII 1926, Home Poll, NAI.

Subhas' anger with Sarat was such that Sarat was still soothing him in a letter of 31.5.26 – three months after the end of the hunger strike (*Correspondence*, pp. 185–6).

55 For his health problems after the strike see ibid., pp. 168, 196, 215 ff. The joint report by Sunil Bose and Lt-Col. R. Kelsall is in file no. 104 & K.W./1927, Home Poll, NAI. The file also contains details of the debate that took place among the Raj officials on how to deal with Bose, and of its eventual resolution.

56 Subhas wrote to Sarat on 4.4.27 (*Correspondence*, pp. 336–44). For his formal reply see ibid., pp. 349–51.

To judge the subtly different ways in which Sarat handled Subhas and Moberley, contrast his letter to Subhas (ibid., pp. 351–7) with the Bengal government's telegram P no. 2755–X of 11.4.27, reporting on the Sarat–Moberley talks (ibid.).

'My mind and spirit. . . .' – letter written from Insein Jail to Gopal Lal Sanyal, 5.4.27 (ibid., pp. 344–5).

The 'shopkeeper' reference is in a letter from Insein Jail to Sarat, 6.5.27 (ibid., pp. 360–2).

7 – The Reluctant Heir

57 Details of Bose's recuperation are in ibid., pp. 364, 369, 375–8.

Sarat's displeasure about Gandhi's 'crowning' of Sengupta was conveyed to Subhas in a letter of 15.7.25 (ibid., p. 58).

The factionalism of Bengal's politicians was analysed in Note No. 3 – 'The Situation in Bengal', file no. G. 57 (III) 1926, pp. 61–71, A.I.C.C. Papers, Nehru Memorial Library (NML), Delhi.

59 Bose's speech at Shraddananada Park is in *ABP*, 13.11.27, p. 4.

60 Ispahani's historical 'if' was articulated in an article on Bose in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, September 1975.

61 Subhas' comments on the Simon Commission came in a speech to the Surma Valley Student Conference, Sylhet, in April 1929 (*Mission of Life*, p. 102).

8 – The Many-Fronted War

62 The speech at the All-India Youth Congress is in *ABP*, 26.12.28, p. 5.

63 The report's qualification is in *The Indian Struggle 1920–34*, p. 211.

64 Bose's speech to the Subjects Committee is in *Netaji Speaks to the Nation*, pp. 17–22.

Speech at the open session, ibid., p. 25.

65 Chaudhuri's recollection is in *Continent of Circe*, p. 114.

67 Bose's perorations about the virtues of class collaboration, freedom as an end in itself and the dangers of bobbed hair all came in his presidential speech to the Maharashtra Provincial Congress in Poona, May 1928 (*ABP*, 3.5.28 and 4.5.28).

68 The fears about the rising tide of independence were minutes by Haig on 4.1.29 (file no. 179/1929, Home Poll, NAI). The request to Bengal is also in this file.

69 Bengal's conclusions about Subhas are in a 'Summary on Youth Movements in Bengal'; its secret joy about revolutionary jealousies is in a letter to Delhi, 21.8.29. File no. 112/1930, Home Poll, NAI.

70 Kiran Shankar Roy the machine politician figures in file no. P-6/1927–31(PTI), AICC Papers, NML.

71 Motilal's views were reported by Grimwood Mears, the Chief Justice

of Allahabad High Court, to the Viceroy on 31.3.29 (R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 53).

73 Bose's speech and the text of his amendment are in file no. 65/1930, Home Poll, NAI.

S.L. Sale's minute is dated 8.1.30 and Haig's dismissal of it 30.1.30 (ibid.).

Details of Bose's prosecution are in file no. 257/VII/1930, Home Poll, NAI.

74 Details of Subhas' jail activities are in *Subhas Chandra*, p. 126.

75 Bose's reaction to Gandhi's petition is in *The Indian Struggle 1920–34*, p. 250ff.

For an official Congress view of the campaign see Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *A History of the Indian National Congress: Vol. I (1885–1935)*, pp. 613–722.

Irwin's biographer mentions 60,000 arrests; the government's preventive steps are in file no. 179/29, Home Poll, NAI.

The American correspondents were greatly sickened by the spectacle of the Raj's police in action, and some of their reports are in *The History of Congress*.

In a telegram to the Secretary of State, 14.7.30, Irwin admitted the movement 'has received a degree of support not only beyond the expectations of government, but beyond the expectations of many of its leaders' (file no. 155/1931, Home Poll, NAI.

A description of what happened to Bose is in *Subhas Chandra*, pp. 127–8. *My Uncle Netaji* too has a reference to it, p. 51; Ashoke's role as messenger is in ibid., p. 49.

76 Chaudhuri's views were expressed in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, LXXVI, 38, 18.9.55, p. 18. See also John Gallagher's chapter 'Bengal Congress' in *Imperialism and Nationalism in India*, ed. Anil Seal, pp. 369–425.

For details of Bose's election see *ABP*, 19.8.30 and 20.8.30.

Bose's speech can be read in the Library of the Calcutta Corporation. It was reported in the 'Netaji Birthday Supplement' of the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, 24.1.70, with all references to fascism removed – an interesting case of Stalinist-style doctoring of history.

77 Bose's reply to Tegart's emissary is in *Subhas Chandra*, p. 132.

Details of Bose's celebration of Independence Day, and its consequences, are in file no. F38/1931, Home Poll, NAI.

78 Bose's disillusionment with the Gandhi–Irwin pact is in *The Indian Struggle 1920–34*, pp. 277–303.

The Viceroy's glee is in telegram no. 975-S, 2.4.31, file no. 155/31, Home Poll, NAI.

Bose's statement is in *ABP*, 14.4.31.

The messy fight once again involved denial of membership receipt books to rival groups (see file no. P-6/1927–31, A.I.C.C. Papers, NML). For Bose's statement on the disruption of a Sengupta meeting in East Bengal, see *ABP*, 23.4.31; Sengupta's sharp rejoinder was printed in ibid., 28.4.31.

The failure of the Subhas–Sengupta meeting was reported in *ABP*, 4.6.31, p. 3.

79 Controversy over the flood-relief programme is in file no. P-6/1927–31, part II, pp. 203–7, A.I.C.C. Papers, NML.

Hoskyns' delight is recorded in file no. 672 serial 1–4, Home Political, West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta.

For Bose's reaction to Hijli see *Subhas Chandra*, pp. 136–7.

Subhas' resignation statement is in *ABP*, 18.9.31, p. 6.

80 The Aney report of 25.9.31 is in file no. G25/506 of 1934–5, A.I.C.C. Papers, NML.

Bose's views on Gandhi's visit to Europe are in *The Indian Struggle 1920–34*, pp. 315–22.

D.A. Low's meticulously researched account is in *Congress and the Raj*.

81 Bose's touchy reaction to Ellison is in *Subhas Chandra*, p. 138.

For the exchange of telegrams between Bose and Patel see *ABP*, 12.11.31.

For Bose's statement at the time of arrest see ibid., 13.11.81.

The speech to the Bengal Provinical Students' Conference is in ibid., 4.10.31, p. 7.

82 Bose's feeling that none of the Bengal districts was ready for civil disobedience was reported by the Viceroy to the Secretary of State on 19.12.31 (see file no. 101/31, Home Poll, West Bengal State Archives).

This file also contains the Viceroy's admission that government policy had no support.

9 – Re-enter Revolution

84 Chaudhuri's broad-brush picture of British funk is in *Continent of Circe* (Jaica edn, Bombay, 1974), p. 143.

The intelligence assessment is in file no. 163/1931, Home Poll, NAI.

The history sheet of Subhas is in file no. 31/XXVII/1932, Home Poll, NAI. This file contains the Raj arguments for the arrest of Subhas and Sarat.

Bose's speech in Poona is in *ABP*, 23.12.31; his warning against any

compromise with the British and about the sufferings of Bengal is in ibid., 3.1.32.

The meanness of government allowances was admitted by the Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council (file no. 31/XXVII/ 1932, Home Poll, NAI).

85 The anger of the Governor of C.P. about Bengal's handling of Bose's arrest was conveyed in a letter to Delhi of 13.1.32 (ibid., letter no. 27/26/VLA).

The problems at Seoni, the superintendent's growing alarm about Subhas' ill-health and the ensuing Raj debate are all in file no. 31/34/ 1932, Home Poll, NAI. This file also contains letters written by Subhas, Sarat and Bibavati.

86 Subhas' transfer to Bhowali sanatorium, and the care he received there at the hands of the superintendent, Dr R.K. Kacker, are in file no. 31/103/1932, Home Poll, NAI. Also in this file are Williamson's comic-opera intervention, and the many letters Subhas wrote to the government of India.

87 Subhas' anguish is in a public statement made as the ship left India (*ABP*, 24.2.33). His doubts about his health were in a letter to Nirmal Kanti Bose, ibid., 2.3.33. His letter to Dilip, written on 5.3.33, is in *The Subhas I Knew*, pp. 96–9.

PART III: EXILE

89 This letter, to Tushar Kani Ghosh, was reported in *ABP*, 18.7.33, p. 8.

10 – The Ambassador With a Cause

91 The damning Roy anecdote was narrated to me by V.B. Karnik, his biographer, in an interview in Bombay in June 1978.

92 Subhas' need for female company, Heddy Fullop-Muller's conversion into Nilima and her enthusiasm for Subhas are all in *The Subhas I Knew*, pp. 158–60.

Bose's letter of 3.3.33 is in P & J 1208 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR; he followed this with a letter to Thurtle, Lansbury's son-in-law and a sympathiser with India's nationalists, dated 17.3.33 and in the same file. Letters between Lansbury's and Hoare's private secretaries are also in this file.

Clauson's minute is in ibid.

92 The letter to Bose of 8.5.33, authorising the grant of passport facilities to Germany, and a confidential note to the Chief Passport Officer, are in P & J 1589/33 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

The nature of the bluff was minuted by G.E. Shepherd on 2.5.33 (ibid.).

Subhas' thoughts about being able to enter England were in a letter to Ashoke, 28.5.33 (*My Uncle Netaji*, pp. 79–80).

James Maxton's letter to Samuel Hoare, 1.7.33, is in P & J 930 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR; in the same file is Clauson's minute, 2.6.33.

94 The London speech has been reprinted in *Fundamental Questions of Indian Revolution*, pp. 1–32.

The Delhi debate about whether or not to ban Bose's speech is in file no. 35/11/1933, Home Poll, NAI.

95 A true copy of the passport issued to Bose is in P & J 930 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR. Some details of it are also in file no. 31/103/33, Home Poll, NAI.

Taylor's exultant letter, 30.6.33, is in P & J 2530/33 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

Clauson's sour comment, minuted on 4.6.33, is in P & J 2530 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

96 Bose freely expressed his views on European politics, particularly on the explosive situation in Austria (see *ABP*, 18.4.33, pp. 6 and 10, 10.5.33, p. 7, 25.5.33, p. 7, 18.7.33, p. 8. For his continuing interest in Indian affairs see ibid., 14.3.34, p. 10, 3.3.34, p. 11, 14.6.34, p. 7. Bose described his trips in letters to Ashoke (*My Uncle Netaji*, pp. 81–96). Some of his writings during his exile were published, in 1947, under the title *Impressions in Life*.

Dr Lesny's activities provoked the wrath of Sir J. Addison, H.M. Consul in Prague; see P & J 1885 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

The Soviets' lack of enthusiasm is mentioned in *My Uncle Netaji*, p. 81.

The story of the German love affair with India is in *India and the Germans* by Walter Leifer. Hitler's views are in *Mein Kampf* (London edn, ?1930), pp. 258–9.

For Hitler's comment to Halifax and the latter's astounded reaction see Eden's memoirs, *Facing the Dictators* (London, 1962), p. 516, and Kirkpatrick's *The Inner Circle* (London, 1959), p. 97.

Rosenberg's views are in *Mythos of the Twentieth Century*.

97 Bose wrote about his frustration at Nazi hands to Ashoke on 12 August 1933 (*My Uncle Netaji*, pp. 83–4).

Kitty Kurti's recollection is in *Subhas Chandra Bose – As I Knew Him*, p. 10.

Bose's contacts with the so-called Nazi Left were arranged by Lothar Frank (see *A Beacon Across Asia*, pp. 49–52).

The consolation for Ashoke came in a letter from Berlin, 12.8.33 (*My Uncle Netaji*, p. 84).

98 The meeting, in the Hotel de France, was witnessed by Alfred Tyrnaeur, who described it graphically in the *Saturday Evening Post*, 11.3.44.

The statement is in *ABP*, 24.5.33, p. 7.

Ashoke recalls meetings between Dr Scarpa and Bose in *My Uncle Netaji*, p. 90.

The conversation with Mussolini is recounted by Lothar Frank in *A Beacon Across Asia*, p. 60.

99 Gowan recounted this solitary story of British success in a letter to the Foreign Office, 9.6.34, P & J 2745 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

A public rejoinder by Bose to Reuter's lie is in *ABP*, 31.7.34, p. 7. The details of Bose's movements in Sofia are in a letter from C.H. Bentinck at the British legation, Sofia, 10.6.34, P & J 2745 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

100 Details of Subhas' domestic life are in *My Uncle Netaji*, pp. 97–8.

Prabhavati informed the Bengal government that she had cabled Subhas – P & J 4263 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

For Bose's hurried dash to India see *My Uncle Netaji*, pp. 105–6.

The Raj debate is in file no. 44/56/1934, Home Poll, NAI.

Bengal's old song about Subhas the revolutionary leader is in P & J 4246 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

101 The original decision to imprison Bose at Presidency Jail is in P & J 4247 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

The change of plan is in P & J 4289 (L/P&J/7/792), IOR.

Bose's representation to the Bengal government is in file no. 44/56/34, Home Poll, NAI. This file also contains details of the medical examination carried out by the Board on 13.12.34 and of U.P.'s decision to provide a jail for him.

102 The press conference is in *ABP*, 11.1.35, p. 9.

Bose described his return to Europe and presentation to Mussolini to Ashoke in a letter of 20.1.35 (*My Uncle Netaji*, pp. 106–7).

Details of the government of India's decision to ban the book are in file no. 35/8/34, Home Poll, NAI.

The quotation is from *The Indian Struggle 1920–34*, pp. 413–4.

The programme for the new party is on pp. 428–9. The 'unique Indian synthesis' is on p. 431.

103 For the analysis of Hitler see *ABP*, 11.1.35, p. 9.

[illegible] Interview in the *Daily Worker* reproduced in *The Indian Struggle 1920–42* (1964 edn), pp 403–4

The Dalyell address is reprinted in *Fundamental Questions of Irish Revolution*, pp 21–2.

These remarks about Mussolini's fascist party are in *Impressions in Life*, p. 20.

[illegible] A description of the operation was provided by Achsah in a letter from Vienna [illegible] (*My Dear Nesta* p. 135)

For reports of Subhas as ambassador of India see *AIR* [illegible] p. 9.

For Bose's desire to visit Ireland and the problems he faced, see letter to Mrs Woods (an Irish sympathiser with the Indian cause) [illegible] in the Woods Collection vol. I, NAI. Bose confided to Bengal's love for Ireland in a letter to Mrs Woods [illegible]

Bose recalled the impact of McSwiney's death in *The Indian Struggle 1920–34* p. 227.

The Irish Justice Department did consult the India Office over Bose's proposed visit to Ireland but decided not to allow Bose into Ireland [illegible] no 44/56/34, Home Poll, NAI)

Details of Bose's triumphant visit to Ireland are in the Woods Collection vol. II NAI

Bose's fact-finding group about British spies in Ireland (see Joyce's letter in file no 44/56/34 Home Poll NAI and *The Indian Struggle*, p. 228.

[illegible] See letter to Nesta, 12.1.36, from Victoria Nelson Collection, part I, vol. VIII NMI; also letter of 4.1.36 in *Bimala* p. 132 *Letters* pp 172–3)

Bose's comments about Kenneth Nelson's death and personal effects of Subhas are in letters to Jan Nelson [illegible] Nelson to Achsah [illegible] and [illegible] *My Dear Nesta* pp 128–9, 138, and to Mrs Woods [illegible] Woods collection, vol. I NAI.

The Poet referred to is *AIR* [illegible] p. 8

The continuing controversy over Sarat Bose's will centres [illegible] 44/56/34, Home Poll, NAI.

[illegible] The meeting was between [illegible] Fowler H.M Consul in Vienna on [illegible] 4 *Bimala* p. 132 *Letters* pp 174–5) and the letter to Mrs Woods [illegible] Woods collection, vol. I NAI.

Bose wrote to Mrs Woods about the procedure at Poet Soul [illegible] Woods Collection, NAI)

The most accurate account of Dr Dyckhoff's Home Background is [illegible] reprinted in *Modern Asian Studies* [illegible] 258–62.

PART IV: THE EMBATTLED LEADER

11 – Interlude

111 R.J. Moore's comment comes in 'British Policy and the Indian Problem 1936–40' in *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives 1935–47*, p. 79

112 Bose had a chapter on the White Paper in *The Indian Struggle 1920–34* pp. 361–85, and made a more considered study of the whole question in 'Pros and Cons of Office Acceptance' (*Through Congress Eyes* pp. 52–75)

The conditions for Bose's relaxed detention are in file no. 127/40 w. Home Poll. NAI. Debate about it is in file no. 144/36/KW. Home Poll. NAI

Netaji's pleas to protest about his detention were organised by the Congress: file no. G-25/1939. A.I.C.C. Papers. NML

Details of this uncharacteristically hospitable Bengal government treatment are in file no. 44/1/1940. Home Poll. NAI

Regarding Bose's daily chats with Prabhavati: see *My Uncle Netaji* p. 134

113 See *Returns Showing the Results of Elections in India 1937*. Cmnd 5589 quoted in *The Partition of India* p. 189

For J.L.'s description of Nehru in his characteristic role of Hamlet see S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru* vol. I pp. 238–39

114 For Subhas' emotional reaction at his reunion with Dilip: see *The Subhas I Knew* p. 169

Subhas' plea to Dilip came a few weeks later. Ibid. p. 184

For Bose's thoughts on war see *Europe – Today and Tomorrow* written in Dalhousie in August 1937 in response to the Calcutta Lecture *The Modern Review* it was reprinted in *Through Congress Eyes* pp. 234–43 and elsewhere. Bose also wrote an article 'Japan's Role in the Far East' 1938 for *The Modern Review* (this was reprinted in *Through Congress Eyes* pp. 280–91). The Gandhi–Bose

115 The unsigned notes in the Prime Min's file in the NAI (no file no. 4/1/38 w. Home Poll. entitled 'Proposed Deportation of a Bengali Anglo-Indian' are to be published by Marion Bose and Sarmila Bose. The file does not seem to have been transferred to the archives or, if transferred, [illegible]

Bose's letter of 21 Oct. 1938 to Mrs Woods: Woods Collection. NAI

Gandhi's letter is in *A Bunch of Old Letters* p. 283

Kripalani's reply from Delhi on 30.6.38. See also the chapter in Bose

in Ranga's *Distinguished Acquaintances*, vol. II, pp. 4–5.

ABP gave the headline 'Two Leaders in Loving Embrace' to its account of the meeting in Allahabad (27.4.37, p. 9).

For the message on Gandhi's birthday see *ABP*, 1.10.37, p. 9.

117 I interviewed Warburg in October 1978.

Zetland's and the government of India's attempts to keep Bose in the dark about his passport are in file no. 28/16/38, Home Poll, NAI.

118 Bose in London – see *ABP*, 25.1.38.

Cripps' views on Bose are in George Orwell's *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*.

The meeting with Zetland is recorded in the MSS. EUR D 609/9, Zetland Papers, IOR.

Pamela de Bouvey and Frederick Warburg described the meeting in an interview in London in October 1978.

12 – Rashtrapati

120 The Haripura speech is in many books, e.g. *Through Congress Eyes*, pp. 1–51, *Crossroads*, pp. 3–28.

121 The full text of the speech to the industry ministers' conference is in ibid., pp. 65–70.

I interviewed Dwijendranath Bose in Calcutta in August and September 1977.

122 Gopal, Nehru's most recent biographer, while devoting about three pages to the national planning committee, manages never to mention Bose.

The remark about Congress supporters, made by the secretary of the Maharashtra P.C.C. on 31.1.38, is quoted in B.R. Tomlinson's *The Indian National Congress and the Raj 1929–42*.

123 I interviewed Soli Batlivala in Bombay in June 1978. Not all tours were quite so blissful: see 'Tour of S.C. Bose (East Bengal)' in file no. 39 of 1938, A.I.C.C. Papers, NML.

124 Gandhi's letter was written from Bombay in December 1938; Bose's reply of 21.12.38, also from Bombay, is in the Nehru Collection, part I, vol. IX, NML.

125 Details of the Delhi A.I.C.C. meeting were provided to me by Niharendru Dutt-Mazumdar during interviews with him in Calcutta in June and July 1977. For Bose's thoughts on this meeting see his letter to Nehru, 28.3.39 (*A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 331). Ranga confirmed Dutt-Mazumdar's recollection in an interview with me in Delhi on 28.6.78. For Bose's air dash to the meeting see *A History of the Indian National Congress*, vol. II, p. 104.

126 Milan Hauner has found evidence of a meeting between Bose and Nazi officials, arranged by N.G. Ganpuley (see Ganpuley's *Netaji in Germany*, pp. 186–7).

The government's analysis of Congress finances was presented on 9.4.39 by John Ewart and entitled 'Review of Congress Resources' (file no. 4/14 A/40, Home Poll, NAI.

This statement, Bose's first in the presidential campaign, was issued on 21.1.39 (*ABP*, 22.1.39). This and the subsequent press statements and telegrams are in *Crossroads*, pp. 87–107.

127 Bose's prediction is in Frank Moraes' *Witness to an Era*, p. 66.

Jaya Prakash Narayan also declared his support, along with Swami Sahajananda, in a press statement on 27.1.39 (*ABP*, 28.1.39).

A complete state-by-state list of votes was printed in ibid., 30.1.39.

Sitaramayya's message is in ibid., 31.1.39.

Gandhi's 'joy in defeat' statement is in ibid., 1.2.39.

13 – Defeat

129 Bose's statement is in *ABP*, 4.2.39, also *Crossroads*, pp. 106–7.

The American view is that of Gordon (*Bengal*, pp. 225, 270).

130 Chaudhuri's reflection is in 'Subhas Chandra Bose', in the *Illustrated Weekly*, 18.9.55. Bose himself wrote an article entitled 'My Strange Illness', which appeared in *The Modern Review*, April 1939, and has been reprinted in *Crossroads*, pp. 115–25, and *My Uncle Netaji*, pp. 238–50. It contains the telegram and some details of how his rivals reacted to his illness.

131 Onions were mentioned in interviews with me by B.T. Ranadive, Calcutta, 24.1.78, and Dwijendranath Bose.

132 The text of the Pant resolution is in *A History of the Indian National Congress*, vol. II, p. 110.

Pant's speech is in Mitra, *Indian Annual Register 1939*, I, 335; also *Bengal*, p. 273.

The communist agony has been described to me by Dutt-Mazumdar and Batlivala. Somnath Lahiri told me that the Bengal communists supported Bose (interview, Calcutta, 1977).

133 Bose's confession is in *My Strange Illness*. The letter was written to his nephew Amiya on 17.4.39 (*Crossroads*, pp. 112–4).

The famous twenty-seven-page letter, written on 28.3.39, is in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 329–49, and in the Nehru Collection, NML. Nehru replied on 3.4.39 (*A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 350–63).

Dilip Roy, *The Subhas I Knew*, p. 115; also pp. 106–54, *passim*.

Nehru's acknowledgement is in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 350.

134 Nehru's confession was made to Taya Zenkin (*Reporting India*, p. 217).

Gopal has much to say on this, in the style of special pleading common to Nehru's admirers (*Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. I, pp. 243–4).

Gandhi's declaration is in Tendulkar's *Mahatma*, vol. 5, p. 95 (cited by Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. I, p. 241).

Many in the Indian Left still cherish hopes of this kind – ironically, for communists played a dubious role in Bose's defeat. See Hiran Mukerjee's *Nehru: The Gentle Colossus*, p. 80, and Mohit Sen's *The Indian Revolution*, p. 35.

The letters were published in the press at that time (*ABP*, 14.5.39). They have since been collected and reprinted in *Crossroads*, pp. 126–70. This, however, does not contain a letter from Gandhi written on 29.4.39 (see file no. G 20/111, A.I.C.C. Papers, NML). Some of the letters were intercepted (see R/3/2/61, IOR).

135 Nehru's intervention, on 17.4.39, is in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 380.

The violence at the A.I.C.C. meeting was witnessed by Santimoy Ganguli, then a member of a revolutionary group close to Bose, and Narain Chakraborthy, a young revolutionary supporter of Bose. Kalyan Roy recalls his father coming home injured, the windscreen of his car smashed. (Interviews, Calcutta, 1977).

The formation of the Forward Bloc was reported in *ABP*, 4.5.39, p. 11, 9.5.39, p. 9.

Tagore's 'Desnayak' ('Leader of the Nation', i.e. Bengal) is in Sharma, *Netaji*, pp. v–vii.

136 The joke was recalled by B.T. Ranadive in an interview with me.

14 – The Lonely Furrow

137 The worsening factional politics in Bengal, Gandhi's determination to get rid of the Bose brothers, and their eventual expulsion from the Congress, form a long, complicated, messy story. I have drawn on letters between Subhas, Sarat, Gandhi, Nehru, Prasad and others in the Nehru Collection, part I, vol. VII, NML, and particularly on a letter from Sarat to the Congress president, 21.1.40, file no. 645/1939, A.I.C.C. Papers, NML; also on the Rajendra Prasad Collection (on microfilm), NML, especially Subhas' letter to Prasad of 9.8.39. I have also used newspaper reports, supplemented by interviews with Dutt-Mazumdar and Lahiri, who worked closely with Bose during this period.

138 For Roy's attacks on Bose see the M.N. Roy Papers, NML, V.B. Karnik's *M.N. Roy: A Political Biography*, and Haithcox's *Communism*

and Nationalism in India. B.R. Tomlinson's *The Indian National Congress and the Raj* details the organisational changes the Gandhians were trying to force through the Congress. See also Bose's signed articles in *Forward Bloc* between 28.10.39 and 25.11.39, reprinted in *Crossroads*, 'Glimpses of My Tour', pp. 197–207.

Ranga in fact organised the meeting; details were given to me in an interview and are in *Distinguished Acquaintances*, p. 7. See also *The Indian Struggle 1920–42* (1964 edn).

139 The story of the Lucknow meeting was told to me by Dutt-Mazumdar.

Amiya recounted his uncle's thoughts during a seminar at the Netaji Bhawan, 26.1.73 (*Netaji and India's Freedom*, pp. 444–5).

Ranadive recollected the story in an interview with me.

The revival of Subhas' interest in yoga is in *Subhas Smiriti*, pp. 123–5.

The futile attempt to reach China is in file no. 28/79/39, Home Poll, NAI.

140 Details of Bose's meeting with the Viceroy are in R/3/2/15, IOR.

Raghunandan Saran monitored Bose's meeting with Indian leaders (*A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 398–400).

K.M. Munshi, a Congress right-winger, later told Linlithgow that the Congress ministers resigned because they feared what Subhas would do (A.K. Majumdar, *Advent of Independence*, p. 396).

141 This period saw some of Bose's most effective writing in *Forward Bloc* (see *Crossroads*, p. 185 ff.). For thoughts on the assembly see signed editorial, 6.1.40 (*Crossroads*, pp. 248–51).

The over-blown rhetoric was in a signed editorial in *Forward Bloc*, 20.1.40 (ibid., p. 255).

Herbert referred to 'anomalous immunity' in a letter to Linlithgow, 4.7.40, R/3/2/25, IOR.

142 For Bengal intelligence fears about Nazimuddin, see letters between D.A. Brayden of the Central Intelligence Office, Calcutta, and W.N.P. Jenkin, Deputy Director, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Delhi, R/3/2/17, IOR.

This first attempt to find a reliable escort is in Bhagat Ram Talwar's *The Talwars of Pathan Land and Subhas Chandra's Great Escape* pp. 55–60.

143 For Bose's convictions about the war see *Crossroads*, pp. 291–5.

Ispahani was writing in the *Illustrated Weekly*, September 1975.

See also 'After Paris', signed editorial in *Forward Bloc*, 15.6.40 (*Crossroads*, pp. 306–7).

The address is in ibid., pp. 310–21.

144 Parekh told the anecdote to S.A. Ayer (*Unto Him a Witness*, p. 62).

145 The 'unwarranted stain' reference is in an article on the Holwell monument in *Forward Bloc*, 29.6.40 (*Crossroads*, pp. 324–5).

For the Bengal government's soothing noises, see interview with Huq in *Hindusthan Times*, 7.7.40 (file no. 95/4/40, Home Poll, NAI).

For government intelligence reports summarising political views of Bose's position, see report of 30.6.40 in file marked 'Arrest of Subash [sic] Bose, July 1940 vice the Holwell Movement agitation' (file no. 33, coll. no. XXI, 1940–1, Office of the Secretary to the Governor of Bengal, R/3/2/25, IOR).

146 The tea-time 'touch' is in *Subhas Chandra*, p. 191.

The Viceroy's anger was expressed in a telegram of 3.7.40 in file no. 33, coll. no. XXI, 1940–1, R/3/2/25, IOR.

See Ispahani's article in the *Illustrated Weekly*, September 1975.

Shankarlal's activities were related to me by Dwijendranath, who was intimately involved. For Munshi's angle See *Advent of Independence*, pp. 408–12. See also file entitled 'Disappearance of Subhas Bose', R/3/2/21, IOR.

Herbert's plan to use the Japanese connection is in MSS. EUR F 125/40, Linlithgow Papers, IOR.

147 Malicious comments were made by Brayden to Jenkin, 2.12.40 (R/3/2/17, IOR). See also file no. 149/40, Home Poll, NAI.

For concern about Bose's condition see telegram from Calcutta Intelligence to Delhi, 5.12.40 (R/3/2/16, IOR).

Sisir Bose's moment of political baptism is in *Netaji and India's Freedom*, pp. 111–51.

15 – 'I am off: you go back'

148 As ever, government spies monitored his every movement. An almost daily record is available in file no. 26, coll. no. I, Office of the Secretary to the Governor of Bengal, R/3/2/18, IOR.

149 My account of the first part of the escape, as far as Peshawar, is based on Sisir Bose's article '*The Great Escape*', in *Netaji and India's Freedom*, supplemented by Dwijendranath's recollections. See also *My Uncle Netaji*, pp. 203–12.

Abad Khan confessed later (file no. 44/25/44, Home Poll, NAI).

150 Beni Madhav Das' farewell meeting with Subhas was described to me by Bina Bhowmick.

For Prabhavati's anguish see 'The Great Escape'. Her republican sentiments are in *The Subhas I Knew*, p. 192.

153 See *The Talwars of Pathan Land and Subhas Chandra's Great Escape*, pp. 65–121.

The stamping anecdote was narrated by Talwar to Santimoy Ganguli, who told it to me.

154 See 'The Great Escape'.

155 The hullabaloo raised by Bose's disappearance is reflected in various sources: see file no. 149/40, Home Poll, NAI, and file entitled 'Disappearance of Subhas Bose', R/3/2/20 and R/3/2/21, IOR. The telegram from Gandhi is in *My Uncle Netaji*, p. 212.

The chasing of *sadhus* is in various accounts.

The Bangkok connection is in file no. 149/40, Home Poll, NAI.

See *The Talwars of Pathan Land and Subhas Chandra's Great Escape*, pp. 65–121.

156 Pilger, the German ambassador, reported the Russian suspicions to Berlin in a telegram of 5.2.41; this also recorded his nervousness about Bose's having come to see him openly (*Netaji and India's Freedom*, p. 240).

158 See ibid., and Uttam Chand Malhotra's *When Bose Was Ziauddin*. I also interviewed Uttam Chand.

159 Quaroni's reports have been reprinted in *The Indian Struggle 1920–42* (1964 edn), pp. 415–8.

161 See ibid.; also a note by Woermann, the director of the political department in Berlin, 7.3.41, in serial 195 – Documents of State Secretary 'India 1941–3', part of captured German documents at Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), London.

A telegram from the German ambassador in Moscow to Berlin, 3.3.41, is in ibid. See also *Netaji and India's Freedom*, pp. 240–1.

162 The hospitality is recorded in Paul Leverkuehn's *Der geheime Nachrichtendienst der deutschen Wehrmacht in Kriege* (Frankfurt, 1957), p. 177, cited by Milan Hauner in his unpublished PhD thesis, p. 181.

PART V: CHALO! DELHI!

16 – The German Interlude

163 The speech is in *India Calling*, p. 49, and *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, p. 140.

Bose's prediction about the future was made after the fall of Paris in a signed editorial in *Forward Bloc*, 15.6.40. (*Crossroads*, pp. 306–7). For an insight into German views see David Irving's *Hitler's War* – particularly the chapter 'Molotov', describing the Russian Foreign Minister's visit to Berlin in November 1940 (pp. 165–80). See also A.C. Nambiar's foreword to *Netaji in Germany*, pp. vii–x.

165 For Bose's fears about another Versailles and the wider consequences of Indian nationalist myopia, see Girija Mookerjee's *Netaji – The Great Resistance Leader* (Netaji Research Bureau Bulletin 7/1966), pp. 9–21. See also the same author's article 'International Image of Subhas Bose' in the *Indian Express*, 23.1.67.

168 For the reaction of one of the 'petty county squires', see Alexander Werth's chapter in *A Beacon Across Asia*, p. 116.

Woermann wrote a memo on the meeting on 3.4.41: see serial 195, FCO, and *Documents of German Foreign Policy* (*DGFP*), D/XII, no. 257; also Hauner, p. 184.

Bose's memo, entitled 'Plan for Co-operation Between the Axis Powers and India', is in serial 195, FCO, and *DGFP*, D/XIII, no. 300; it is also reproduced in *The Indian Struggle 1920–42* (1964 edn), pp. 419–30, *A Beacon Across Asia*, pp. 281–94, and Hauner, p. 186.

169 Woermann's note, made on 12.4.41, is in *DGFP*, D/XII, no. 323. Hauner cites the passage too, p. 186.

170 The Bose–von Ribbentrop conversation is in GB57, part of serials F1–20 of Reich Foreign Minister's Secretariat, 'Record of Conversations between Ribbentrop and Bose 1941–2', FCO; see also *DGFP*, D/XII, no. 425.

171 Details of personal allowances for Bose are mentioned by Hauner, pp. 185–6.

Bose's supplementary memo is in serial 195, FCO, and has been reproduced in *The Indian Struggle 1920–42* (1964 edn), pp. 431–3.

172 For Bose's problems with the 'master race' see Werth in *A Beacon Across Asia*; also *Troubled Loyalty*, pp. 356–7.

Werth provides a first-hand account of this department's work in *A Beacon Across Asia*, pp. 116–44; Sykes provides von Trott's perspective in *Troubled Loyalty*, pp. 348–69. See also Hauner, p. 255.

174 The Mussolini–von Ribbentrop conversation is in *DGFP*, D/XII, no. 511, p. 806.

Hauner cites memos about Italy between von Ribbentrop and Woermann, p. 195; there are also references to this in *DGFP*, D/XII, nos. 561 and 598.

Ciano's diary note was made on 6.6.41 (*Ciano's Diplomatic Papers 1939–43*, p. 354).

For Bose's unfavourable reaction to Ciano, see his letter to Woermann of 5.7.41 (serial 41, German Embassy, Rome, 'Bose, India's Independence, 1941', document no. 28494, FCO).

Bismarck telegraphed Berlin on 19.1.41 (serial 41, document no. 28484, FCO).

Woermann replied on 20.6.41 (serial 41, document no. 28487, FCO); cited by Hauner, p. 196.

175 Abid Hasan told me about the wedding in an interview.

The letter to Faltis is in the Faltis Collection, NAI. The top of the letter is missing, and a note, presumably by Faltis, explains: 'The cut off beginning of the letter deals with intimate remarks S. Ch. Bose made in a very personal matter concerning E. Sch'.

176 For Emilie Schenkl's move to Vienna, see note written by Bose from Berlin, 25.6.42 (ibid.).

Schenkl recalled her wartime experiences in letters to Mrs Woods (Woods Collection, NAI).

Bose made gloomy reflections on the Russo–German conflict in a letter to Woermann, 5.7.41 (ibid.).

For the Bose–Woermann interview see *DGFP*, D/XIII, no. 120.

Woermann's 'brainwashing' proposal is in ibid. He was overruling a proposal from the German embassy in Rome to transport Bose to a neutral country and hold him there as a 'trump card' to be used at some future date (serial 41, document no. 28497, FCO).

See Giselher Wirsing's *Indien – Asiens gefährliche Jahre* (Düsseldorf, 1968).

177 For Orwell's comment see his introduction to *Talking to India*, a selection of English-language broadcasts to India.

Gita Ram Goel's *Netaji and the CPI* replays the communist wartime abuse.

178 The cartoons appeared in the communist organ, *People's War*, on 19.7.42, 13.9.42 and 26.9.43 (see pp. 44, 46, 53). Adhikari was editor of *People's War* for some of this period.

For Talwar's version see his chapters entitled 'Aftermath (1941–2)' and Aftermath (1943–5)', p. 141 ff.

179 I interviewed Adhikari in Delhi on 28.6.78.

I interviewed Ganguli in a series of meetings in Calcutta between May and August 1977 and in February 1978 (see also Ganguli's report in *Netaji and India's Freedom*, pp. 243–8).

For Abad Khan's testimony, see the statement he made to the British: 'I warned Nambat Khan that Bhagat Ram was a dangerous man and advised him not to mix with him' (file no. 44/25/44, Home Poll, NAI). Uttam Chand mentioned to me that in Lahore Jail a British CID man had told him Ram was working for the Raj.

In the matter of contacts between Russian and British agents after the war, I am indebted to research by Hauner.

180 Batlivala told me this story about himself.

The appeal issued by Harry Pollitt, on behalf of the British Communist Party, for support for the Soviet Union, and the much-discussed 'jail document' of the Indian communists, are in file no. F44/32, Home Poll, NAI. For a discusion of the implications of the communists' wartime treatment of Bose, see *Netaji and India's Freedom*, p. 436.

181 Bose's humiliation is recorded with great glee in *Troubled Loyalty* p. 360.

I have based this account of propaganda mainly on Hauner's thesis.

182 For the setting-up of the Centro India see *DGFP*, D/XIII, no. 379; serial 41, document no. 28533 (FCO); and Hauner, p. 263.

183 Schedai's curious letters, of 29.9.41 and 11.11.41, are in serial 41, documents nos 28519 and 28613, FCO.

Schedai's activities and associates were described by von Trott to Dr Doertenbock, counsellor at the German embassy, Rome, on 29.10.41 (serial 41, document no. 28540, FCO).

For Schedai's denunciation of 'His Excellency Mazzotta', and other views, see the statement he appended to his letter to Dr Doertenbock, 29.9.41 (serial 41, document no. 28519, FCO).

These figures, which are Hauner's, come from *Subhas Pasha*, a larger, unpublished version of Hugh Toye's *Springing Tiger*.

184 The transformation of Bose into Netaji was described to me by Abid Hasan. See also *Netaji in Germany*, pp. 27–46; Ganpuley is the hero-worshipper I refer to (ibid., p. 43).

185 Hasan's account comes from my interview with him.

For the effect of Subhas' charm see Girija Mookerjee's *This Europe*.

See Ganpuley's chapter on Azad Hind Radio in *Netaji in Germany*, pp. 47–59; also Werth in *A Beacon Across Asia*, pp. 129–33.

186 The Foreign Office memo about von Ribbentrop's orders was written by Rintelen and is in *DGFP*, D/XIII, no. 404. Von Ribbentrop's reports to Hitler is in *DGFP*, D/XIII, no. 468.

A report of the meeting between the Free India Centre and the Ufficio India is in Hauner, p. 481. Von Trott's bitter comments were made to Doertenbock on 29.10.42 (Hauner, p. 482).

187 Abid Hasan described to me how Bose faced up to the problems of the Annaburg camp; see also Toye, p. 69.

The German interrogation of Indian POWs, and the shared use of the old Aryan swastika, are in Hauner, p. 483.

188 For American press reports see serial 41, documents nos 28588 and 28601, FCO.

A record of Bose's conversation with von Ribbentrop is in DGFP, D/XIII, no. 521, also serials F1–20, GB57, FCO.

189 The conversation between Hitler and the Grand Mufti is in *DGFP*, D/XIII, no. 515.

Yamamoto Bin's work is referred to in Joyce Lebra's *Jungle Alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army*, p. 110. See also chapter 'To Delhi! To Delhi! 1943–5' by Fred Saito and Tatsuo Hayashida in *A Beacon Across Asia*, p. 150.

190 Lebra provides only a line of this document; I have provided the full text and my own translation. A literal and rather poor translation is in K.K. Ghosh's *The Indian National Army – Second Front of the Indian Independence Movement*, p. 268.

192 Von Ribbentrop's rejection is in serial 195, FCO, also cited by Hauner, p. 402.

The panicky state of the country is reflected in several reports made to Linlithgow by provincial governors: Sir R. Lumley (Bombay), 1.1.42, Sir A. Hope (Madras), 4.1.42, Sir S. Cunningham (North–West Frontier Province); see *The Transfer of Power*, vol. I, documents nos 1, 4, 8.

Azad's mournful reflections are in *India Wins Freedom*.

Linlithgow's telegram to Amery is in *The Transfer of Power*, vol. I, document no. 23.

193 Attlee's letter to Amery is in ibid., document no. 35.

Churchill's confession is in J.W. Wheeler-Bennett's *King George VI*, p. 538.

Roosevelt's chat is in W.D. Hassett's *Off the Record With FDR*, p. 28.

194 Goebbels' comment was made on 2.3.42 (*The Goebbels Diaries*, p. 68).

Bose had been repeatedly urging Woermann to be allowed to discard his disguise as Mazzotta (Hauner, p. 427).

Bose's eleven-point proposals are in Hauner, pp. 429–30.

The new draft and von Trott's detailed plan are in ibid., pp. 430–3, and *The Goebbels Diaries*, p. 67.

Von Ribbentrop's rejection is in Hauner, p. 436.

195 Bose in Bad Gastein is mentioned by Hauner, p. 435.

Amery's reassurance is in *The Transfer of Power*, vol. I, pp. 396 and 403.

196 For the most recent view of how Nehru saw Cripps' mission, see Gopal, vol. I, pp. 276–87.

Azad's remarks are in his *India Wins Freedom* (October 1976 edn), p. 36.

For Bose's speech see Pramode Sengupta's papers, NML.

Bose's speech about the Congress about-turn is in *Selected Speeches*, p. 143.

Hauner discusses the German attempts to monitor the speeches, pp. 442–3.

Goebbels' diary entry is dated 6.4.42 (*The Goebbels Diaries*, p. 114). For the broadcasts' effect on Indian soldiers, see Hauner, p. 483.

Ranga in an interview with me (in Delhi, 28.6.78) said that Gandhi had asked him whether he had heard Bose's broadcasts, commenting, 'He sounds very happy and very active, and he is doing his work.' For reactions to the death report, see *India Wins Freedom*.

197 The Japanese attempts resulted in what is now called the First I.N.A., and its story has been told in many books, most competently *The Indian National Army* and *Jungle Alliance*.

For Rash Behari's renunciation see ibid., p. 112.

The Japanese decisions are in a Sugiyama memo quoted by Lebra, pp. 112, 227–8.

198 For Japan's renewed interest and the final stages of the declaration game, see Hauner, pp. 446–8.

199 The different versions of the talks are those of M.R. Vyas, *The Azad Hind Movement in Europe* (Netaji Research Bureau Bulletin, 1963), p. 16; Werth in *A Beacon Across Asia*, pp. 138–40; and Furtwängler in *Troubled Loyalty*, p. 364.

A record of the conversation is in serial 13114, Office of State Security Keppler, item 6, FCO. Schmidt's official record has been reproduced in *Netaji and India's Freedom*, pp. 310–5.

The Faqir of Ipi reference is in *This Europe*, p. 134.

200 On censoring of radio broadcasts see Werth in *A Beacon Across Asia*, p. 130. But Bose's open letter to Cripps was amended at draft stage by von Ribbentrop before its broadcast on 27.3.42 (Hauner, p. 442).

The planning cell was formed in December 1941 (Hauner, p. 261).

Hitler said of the Legion: 'The Indian Legion is a joke. There are Indians who can't kill a louse. They won't kill an Englishman either. I consider it nonsense to put them opposite the English. . . . If we use Indians to turn prayer-mills, they would be the most indefatigable soldiers in the world' (William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, p. 1309).

Bose's public role is recounted in serial 1314, item 11, FCO.

Bose's refusal to let the Legion go to Europe is in Hauner, p. 489.

The desertions from the British Army are in Hauner, p. 489.

Mookerjee's observations are in *This Europe*.

201 The speech was made while welcoming prisoners from Italy in June 1942 (*Springing Tiger*, p. 78).

The condition of the prisoners was recalled to me by Abid Hasan; see also *Netaji in Germany*, pp. 80–1.

The pledge is in ibid., p. 89; the oath is in ibid., p. 96, and *Springing Tiger*, pp. 79–80.

202 Nambiar's consoling reflection is in the foreword to *Netaji in Germany*, pp. ix, x.

Bose's letter to von Ribbentrop is referred to in Hauner.

203 For the Indian reaction to British behaviour in Burma, see *The Transfer of Power*, vol. II, pp. 208, 376, 394–5.

Gandhi's statement is quoted in *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. I, p. 292.

204 A record of the Bose–von Ribbentrop meeting is in serial 1314, item 4, FCO.

205 The account of Bose's state of mind is based on *Netaji in Germany*, p. 127.

Saito and Hayashida, in *A Beacon Across Asia*, pp. 159–60, quote the telegram Tokyo sent the Japanese embassy in Berlin in February 1943: 'The Ambassador is requested to tell the passengers they will be travelling at their own risk and unconditionally.'

The details of the journey are based on an interview with Hasan.

17 – Netaji

207 Tojo's obduracy, and his eventual meeting with Bose, are in *A Beacon Across Asia*, pp. 166–7.

208 Bose's statement at the Tokyo press conference is in *India Calling*, pp. 32–3, and *Selected Speeches*, p. 161.

209 For the Singapore welcome see M. Sivaram's *The Road to Delhi*, p. 121 ff., and Sopan's *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: His Life and Work*, pp. 289–91.

Rash Behari Bose's speech is in ibid., p. 299, and *The Road to Delhi*, p. 123.

For the first of Bose's classic speeches see *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: His Life and Work*, pp. 304–14.

Bose's first speech to the I.N.A. is in ibid., pp. 327–9.

One of the officers who was at Singapore airport to greet Bose was Shah Nawaz Khan, who recorded his impresions in *My Memories of the I.N.A. and Its Netaji*, pp. 85–6.

210 The Tojo–Terauchi conversation is in *A Beacon Across Asia*, p. 181.

The speech in the central plaza of Singapore is in *India Calling*, pp, 47–50, and *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: His Life and Work*, pp. 333–5.

211 Bose's relationship with his military men is in *My Memories of the I.N.A. and Its Netaji*; details of badminton games, etc., are in *Unto Him a Witness*, pp. 167–83.

The 'Netaji' anecdote is in *The Road to Delhi*, pp. 123, 133–4.

212 The 'Indian soil' anecdote is put together from accounts in ibid., pp. 140–2, and *Unto Him a Witness*, pp. 247–9.

213 The Bose–Mohan Singh meeting is based on details in Mohan Singh's *Soldiers' Contributions to India's Independence*.

Bose's assertion about propaganda is in *The Road to Delhi*, p. 133.

214 The Thai Prime Minister's accolade was recalled by Abid Hasan.

Ba Maw has given a moving account of Bose's effect on him in *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution 1939–46*. The Ba Maw conversations are from this book.

215 For the Japanese view of Bose's Provisional Government, see 'Subhas Chandra Bose and Japan', prepared by the Fourth Section, Asian, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, August 1956. Selected extracts from this document are in *Netaji and India's Freedom*, pp. 329–421.

Ayer's avid recollection is in *Unto Him a Witness*, pp. 163–4.

The proclamation is in almost every book on Bose; the oath is in ibid., p. 306.

216 The Raj admission of Bose's influence came in an enclosure in a letter from Sir R.F. Mudie, Home Member, to Sir Evan Jenkins, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, 23.8.47 (*The Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, document no. 57, pp. 273–5).

217 The present of an aircraft is in *The Road to Delhi*, p. 169.

218 Bose set out in very clear terms his intentions for the liberation of India. Ghosh discusses this in *The Indian National Army*, pp. 166–7.

219 Ian Stephen's anecdote is in his *Monsoon Morning*; he confirmed it in correspondence with me.

220 The Japanese perspective, and the debates among their senior military and political officials, are in *Jungle Alliance*, pp. 149–73.

221 Khan's recollection is in *My Memories of the I.N.A. and Its Netaji*, p. 101.

The official Japanese history is quoted in *Netaji and India's Freedom*, p. 382.

222 Khan was present during Bose's conversation with Kawabe (ibid., p. 134).

Ayer's recollections are in *Unto Him a Witness*, p. 194. For the Japanese version see *Netaji and India's Freedom*, p. 381.

224 For the accolade from the official Japanese historians, see ibid., p. 382.

The quotation from the speech of 17.10.43 is in *Springing Tiger*, p. 103.

The speech of 25.10.43 is in *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: His Life and Work*, pp. 408–17, and elsewhere.

227 The conversation with Katakura is in *My Memories of the I.N.A. and Its Netaji*, p. 111.

The late-night conversation with Mutaguchi and Fujiwara is in *Jungle Alliance*, p. 176.

Bose's 'Plans For the Administration of Conquered Areas in India' are on microfilm at the General Services Administration, National Archives and Record Services, Washington.

229 The proclamation carried by the I.N.A. is in *Springing Tiger*, pp. 228–31.

The second proclamation is in ibid., pp. 231–4.

Mutaguchi's chat to the war correspondents is in *A Beacon Across Asia*, p. 203.

230 The revealing blunder is in *The Road to Delhi*, p. 196.

232 Sato's bitter words are in *Jungle Alliance*, p. 185.

Slim's recollections are in *Defeat Into Victory*.

Khan's report is quoted in *The Indian National Army*, p. 129.

233 Bose's mystical march is in *Jungle Alliance*, p. 190.

234 Bose's optimistic reading of the situation was in a special order of the day on the withdrawal from Imphal, 14.8.44 (see *Jungle Alliance*, p. 234).

235 Fujiwara's assessment is in *Fujiwara Essays* (SEATIC Historical Bulletin no. 240, Singapore, 9.7.46), p. 37, cited by Louis Allen in *The End of the War in Asia*, and in *Springing Tiger*.

This British view is in *The War Against Japan: Vol. III: The Decisive Battles*.

236 The counter-propaganda unit was run by J.A.E. Heard, who kindly provided me with information about it.

237 For Bose's relations with his soldiers and officers see *Unto Him a Witness*, pp. 212–4.

The dinner and chat with Kan-ei Chudo are in *A Beacon Across Asia*, pp. 213–4; see also *Netaji and India's Freedom*, p. 398.

238 The Japanese embarrassment about Bose's refusal to accept the Order of the Rising Sun is in *A Beacon Across Asia*, p. 215.

The Russian 'No' is in ibid., p. 404.

241 The 'spirit of independence' speech is in ibid., p. 404.

Bose's agony about the defection is in *Unto Him a Witness*, pp. 201–2.

Saghal wrote a 'Special Note Regarding Desertion' on 6.4.45 (*Two Historic Trials in Red Fort*, ed. Moti Ram, p. 347).

242 Khan's diary entry is in ibid., pp. 334–5.

246 Bose's comment that only two men mattered in India is in *Soldiers'*

Contributions to Indian Independence, p. 265, and *The Road to Delhi*, pp. 129–32.

The 'Father of the Nation' speech was broadcast on Rangoon Radio on 6.7.44: see *Unto Him a Witness*, pp. 307–16, and elsewhere.

247 Bose's look at post-war Europe came in a broadcast from Singapore on 25.5.45 (*Selected Speeches*, pp. 230–1).

248 Bose's cool detachment was recorded by an awe-struck Ayer, who was devastated by the news (*Unto Him a Witness*, p. 52).

249 See the official Japanese version of all these events in *Netaji and India's Freedom*, p. 415; also *A Beacon Across Asia*, p. 222, and Tatsuo Hayashida's *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: His Great Struggle and Martyrdom*, pp. 140–4, 150–3.

252 Habib narrated the whole story of Bose's death to Ayer about a month later in Tokyo (*Unto Him a Witness*, p. 114). This account differs somewhat from what Habib later told Hayashida and various government commisions and enquiry teams.

PART VI: THE MYTH AND THE LEGEND

18 – What If He Returned?

258 For the diary entry see *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, ed. Penderel Moon, p. 164.

259 The government investigations are mentioned in Suresh Bose's *Dissentient Report* and Samar Guha's *Netaji – Dead or Alive?* Both books contain extracts from secret government reports and files which have not yet been made public.

261 Auchinleck's letter to the Viceroy is dated 26.11.45 and is in *The Indian National Army*, pp. 319–20.

262 Gandhi's statement is in *The Mahatma*. See also *Dissentient Report*, p. 212.

263 For a very full and characteristically Bengali account of the revolt, see Gautam Chattopadhyay's *The Almost Revolution*.

The best insider's account of this little-studied episode is *Mutiny of the Innocents* by B.C. Dutt, one of the ringleaders.

The *Times of India*'s comment, 23.2.46, is quoted in *The Indian National Army*, p. 236.

269 Santimoy Ganguli told me this story in an interview.

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Oral transcription list at NML:
Mrs S.C. Bose; Satish Das Gupta; Nellie Sengupta; Dr Sampurnananda.

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This account of the militant nationalist and political theorist Subhas Bose was originally published in 1982. It has gone some way towards redressing the curious neglect with which Bose has been treated by political historians. He was probably the most controversial of those Indians working for independence from Britain in the years leading up to World War Two. His career, from his early espousal of Gandhi's civil disobedience policy to his ill-fated attempts at persuading the Axis powers to use their military might to rid India of the Raj, provides valuable lessons for anti-imperialist struggles today. *The Lost Hero* vividly evokes his life and times, simultaneously telling the story of India's fight for political self-determination against a background of momentous world events.

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